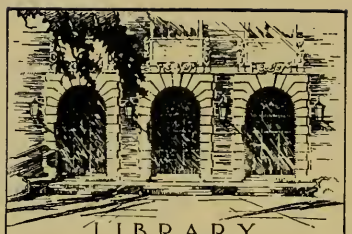

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JACQUELINE OF HOLLAND.

A HISTORICAL TALE.

BY

THOMAS COLLEY GRATTAN,

AUTHOR OF "THE HEIRESS OF BRUGES," &c.

Nought is there under Heaven's wide hollownesse
That moves more deare compassion of minde,
Than beautie brought t' unworthy wretchednesse,
Through envie's snares, or fortune's freakes unkinde.
I, whether lately through her brightnesse blynde,
Or through alleageance and faste fealtie,
Which I do owe unto all womankynde,
Feele my hart perst with so greate agonie
When such I see, that all for pitty I could dy.

Faerie Queene.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

HENRY COLBURN AND RICHARD BENTLEY,

NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1831.

LONDON:

HENRY BAYLIS, JOHNSON'S-COURT, FLEET-STREET.

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JACQUELINE OF HOLLAND.

CHAPTER I.

We must now turn our attention from scenes which have so long occupied it, to others forming a strong contrast with them. We must abandon both the camp and the court for solitude and desolation; political conspiracies for absorbing passion; the wiles of sophistry for tricks of magic; the mainland shores of Holland for the lonely and billow-beaten island of Urk.

But before we altogether transport our readers

to that wild spot, we must go back a little from the regular progress of our story, to trace one anterior passage in the life, and a few variations in the feelings of a personage who, though a while out of sight, has not, we hope, yet escaped the reader's mind—their sometime acquaintance Humphrey, the good Duke of Glocester. We have not now to treat of him in his capacity as the champion of a princess, the rival of a sovereign, or the ruler of a realm; but simply in that character from the pains of which pride, valour, or ambition cannot give impunity—as the slave and victim of that fatal passion which swallows in its vortex all the rest, and which forms the staple not only of romantic fiction but of real life. We have not yet seen Duke Humphrey in the light of a lover. It is as such that we have now to paint him.

Glocester's attachment to Jacqueline was composed, no doubt, of many of the best elements of love, but not of these entirely; for mixed with admiration for her person, and

esteem for her virtues, were views of aggrandisement and distinction, emanating less in devotion to her than in his own ambition. Had no other object crossed his path of high and honourable duty, it had been well, perhaps, for her, and certainly so for him. His attachment might then have been by degrees purified from all its dross, and he might have loved at once with the fervour of passion and the dignity of pride. But his fate was different; and ere long he was doomed to sacrifice all the ennobling qualities of such a state, at the shrine of that infatuation which, in the phraseology of a writer of the century later than his time, "is no longer love, but a vehement perturbation of the mind; a monster of nature, wit, and art; a burning disease and raging phrensy; a wandering, extravagant, domineering, boundless, irrefragable, and destructive passion."

The object which had inspired this very combustible combination was a certain damsel called Elinor Cobham, one of the daughters of Regi-

nald, the third lord of that name. She had been chosen, with other young ladies of high quality, by King Henry V., to fill the post of maids of honour to the Countess Jacqueline, when that monarch espoused her cause, and received and treated her with such distinction in England four years previously. When Glocester repaired to Hainault with his affianced bride, Elinor Cobham was one of those who followed in her suite. But after the fatal issue of the war, when the English auxiliaries were forced to abandon the province they had at first conquered, and Glocester obliged to return home to the duties of his protectorate, the lately appointed maids of honour reaccompanied him, leaving Jacqueline to the attendance of the faithful Benina Beyling, who remained with her at Mons, until the burghers of that her "false and traitorous town," as she wrote to Glocester, broke all their oaths of fealty, joined Dukes Philip and John her persecutors, and forced her to fly and take refuge with her staunch ad-

herents the Hocks, in the marshy fastnesses of Holland.

Jacqueline had never observed or suspected any thing between Elinor Cobham and Glocester, although she neither loved him little enough to be on the perpetual watch of envious vanity, which forgets the object of its fancied attachment to catch at slights and dishonour done to itself—nor well enough to have an open eye for all his good qualities, but sightless for every violation of fidelity. Yet a projected union of mere political expediency, with a prince every way worthy of her hand, left Jacqueline's heart, as has been amply explained, totally free from the tormenting anxieties of love; and the high-minded woman who has no fixed attachment for an individual of the other sex, is sure to possess no feeling of rivalry for one of her own. Jealousy, the base born offspring of selfishness and envy, is wholly incompatible with generosity of heart or greatness of

soul; for the first is too confiding towards others, and the second too confident in self.

Glocester had become enamoured of Elinor the very first time he saw her, which was at one of the splendid entertainments given at Westminster, in honour of Jacqueline. The observation of the amorous and libertine duke was attracted by a sylph-like figure, winding with more than common grace through the mazes of the dance; and the ray of romantic enthusiasm which beamed from her dark grey eyes, and lit up the expression of her irregular, scarcely handsome, but still most striking countenance, threw also into Glocester's bosom that momentary warmth, which in court-gallantry is ycleped love. He singled her out, and made her his partner in the dance alternately with the Dutch princess, whose brilliant beauty and splendid adornments could not efface the impression of the younger and less important object, who had already entered into unconscious rivalry with her. Glocester had a broad bosom for the reception of

amorous impressions. He found ample room for two attachments at once. He resolved on the spot to carry on a double design and gratify a double passion; to pay his court to both fair ones, the one on the high road of honourable connection, the other in the winding paths of illicit love.

It has been seen with what success his open and avowed project was in the first instance carried on; how he gained the consent of Jacqueline and the countenance of his brother the king, who was well pleased to see English influence in the way of being extended and fixed both in Holland and Hainault, stations so important as a mart for English commerce, and as a ready road to carry military operations into the very heart of France; and be it observed, in passing, that the policy of that day in this respect has been ever since and must be still the tenacious aim of England, until all views of continental influence be abandoned, and she rests satisfied to become an isolated

speck on the ocean of politics, as in the map of the world; great in internal wealth, domestic peace, and theoretic knowledge, but narrowed and cramped in the science of morals and the arts of social life, which, to him who has seen mankind on a broader scale, appear what give the noblest character to a people, and the highest value to existence.

Elinor Cobham was nothing loth to meet the flattering gallantries of her potent and princely admirer. She was ambitious and vain as well as susceptible of more tender emotions, and highly tinctured with that irregular talent which renders its possessors so liable to such a temptation as now assailed her. Her self-taught pen and pencil had both made frequent and astonishing attempts to embody the vague imaginings of her romantic mind. Wildly brought up and almost uneducated, her natural genius supplied the place of teaching and example, but it ran riot the while. She was deep read in the extravagant romances which bound-

ed the literature of ladies of fashion in her time. Her father's library lay open to her indiscriminate use; and though printing had only began to glimmer on the horizon of knowledge, she had still great food for such an appetite as hers. She early knew, almost by heart, the whole contents of a copy of "the boke of Romaunts, shone with claspys and bound with silver," the stories of Sir Launcelot of the Lake, Sir Tristan de Leonnois and numerous others; and she often illustrated the wild inventions of her own muse, whose lessons were learned in such works, with illuminations modelled from the curious and precious MSS. of "The hours of Anne of Brittanny," and the like, with a taste if not a skill that would not have disgraced Francesco Veronese or Girolmo Dei Libri, the most renowned artists in that now-forgotten line.

But unfortunately for Elinor she did not confine her studies or pursuits to such a course of practice as this. Her ardent mind, panting

for variety of knowledge, and boldly seeking it in the highest and lowest spheres, had plunged into both the mysteries of astrology and the mystification of magic; but to neither of those intricate subjects could she find her way alone. Reading confused, and thought distracted her; and she felt as if relieved from incipient madness by the chance discovery that her father's chaplain had given himself up, body and soul, to all the occult and forbidden sciences, a knowledge of which she was certain could never be acquired without a guide. This man's name was Bolingbroke, a dark and desperate impostor; who, not content with the secret practice of his various arts, felt a moral longing for young and inexperienced converts, analogous to the desires of some juggling priest of old, for those innocent victims who bowed at the shrine of his false gods.

The intimacy between the professor and his pupil became close and deep, more so perhaps than history has revealed or we can fathom.

But it is certain that when Glocester first made his advances towards Elinor's heart, her mind was not uncorrupt. She was by nature an adept in coquetry; art had matured her into a practised hypocrite; and having been so long labouring to cheat herself, it was not astonishing that she should readily follow the tempting lure which told her she might dupe another. To marry Glocester was her aim and study. Bolingbroke set his whole mind to aid her object, and every possible means were employed to work on the passions and the feelings of him, who little knew the deep design that was undermining and counteracting his own.

It does not enter into our plan to detail the manœuvrings of female blandishments and priestly guile by which Glocester was met in every advance; how he was coaxed on and repulsed by turns; wound up, let loose, and played with, like as an angler manages the victim on his hook. It is sufficient to state the

result. He succeeded in his designs on Elinor, but it was such success as brings ruin to the victor as well as the foe he defeats. Glocester bought his triumph by the sacrifice of princely faith, royal dignity, and personal esteem. In a moment of delirious dishonour he swore to retard his marriage with Jacqueline, and never to complete it without Elinor's consent.

On these conditions he triumphed, and a long succession of excitements increased the growth of a passion which indulgence is falsely supposed to pall. Bolingbroke was deep in the confidence of the guilty lovers, and he was in the sequel despatched to Rome, with full, but secret powers from Glocester, to induce Pope Martin to refuse his consent to the demanded annullation of Jacqueline's union with her cousin, John of Brabant. It was thus that Glocester's secret persuasions with the pontiff, be they what they might, were employed to accomplish (while he was supposed to thwart)

the very object which his enemy, Duke Philip, was so assiduously labouring to effect.

The success of Bolingbroke's mission has been already told, in the conversation of Vrank van Borselen with his father; but ere he could again reach England to report its results, Glocester, hurried on by the rapidity of Jacqueline's reverses, and by the violence of his enmity to Philip, resolved at all hazards to send a supply of troops to his affianced, and not yet quite abandoned bride. Even had he not been stimulated by this latter motive it would have been impossible to resist the eloquent pleadings of her distress, when forsaken by almost all but her mother, Van Monfoort, her brother Lewis, and Benina Beyling, she poured out appeals to him, to whom she considered herself bound by ties of moral obligation which no sentiment of personal objection opposed. The best proofs of Jacqueline's attachment and of its nature, are to be found in her letters, written at this period, which clearly shew the unconsummated

state of her connection with Glocester, (in opposition to what we think the hasty and established conclusions of most historians,) while they offer a good specimen of the epistolary style of those days. One of them is couched as follows:—

"My very redoubted Lord and Father,*

"In the most humble of manners in this world, I recommend myself to your goodness and favour. May it please you to know that I am now writing to your glorious power, as the most doleful, most ruined, and most treacherously deceived woman that lives; for on Sunday the 13th of this month of June, the deputies of your town of Mons, brought back a treaty that

* The translator of the Monstrelet conjectures, that the word "*père*" may be taken in the signification of *peer*, rather than *father*, as on another occasion. But the signature of the letter disproves this, and shews that Jacqueline wrote to her affianced lord in terms of profound but quaint respect, which appear, no doubt, strange to modern notions of style.

had been agreed on between my cousins of Burgundy and Brabant, which treaty had been made without the knowledge of my mother, as she has certified to me by her chaplain. Nevertheless she has written me letters, confirming this treaty having been made, but that she could in no way advise me, not knowing herself what to do, only telling me to consult the good folks of this town, to see what aid and advice they could give me.

"Upon this, my sweet lord and father, I went on the morrow to the town-house, and remonstrated with them, that it was at their request and entreaties that it had pleased you to leave me under their safeguard, and how they had sworn on the holy sacrament and bible to be true and loyal subjects, to take good care, and give you good accounts of me on your return. To this they bluntly replied that they had not force enough to defend me; and instantly rose tumultuously, saying, that my people wanted to murder them; and in my despite

they seized one of my subjects, Serjeant Macquart, and cut off his head, making prisoners many others who loved you best, to the amount of two hundred and fifty. They also thought to seize Sir Baldwin, the treasurer, and Sir Louis de Monfoort; but though they failed in that, I know what they intend doing if they can; for they plainly tell me, that if I decline to make peace, they will deliver me over to my cousin, John of Brabant. They only give me a week's respite, when I shall be forced to go into Flanders, the hardest and most painful thing that could happen to me, for I fear I never shall see you more, unless it pleases you to hasten to my aid.

"Alas! my redoubted lord and father, my whole hope is in your power, seeing that you are my only happiness, and that all my sufferings arise from my attachment to you. I therefore implore you, most humbly and for the love of God, that you would be pleased to take pity on me, and to hasten to the relief of your most

doleful creature, if you would not lose her for ever. I hope you will do so, for I have never done, and never will do aught which could displease you, but I am ready to die for attachment to your person and power. By my faith, my redoubted lord and prince, by the love of God and my Lord St. George, I beg you to consider my melancholy situation, for it seems as if you had entirely forgotten me.

"Nothing more have I to say at present, but that I ought sooner to have sent Sir Louis de Monfoort to you; for he cannot longer remain here, though he kept close to me when I was abandoned by all the rest, and he will tell you more particularly all that has happened than I can do in a letter. I entreat, therefore, you will be a kind lord to him, and send me your good pleasure and command, which I will most heartily obey. This is well known to the blessed son of God, whom I pray to grant you a long and happy life, and that I may have the great joy of soon seeing you!

"Written in the false and traitorous town of Mons, with a doleful heart, the 6th day of July.

"Your sorrowful and well-beloved daughter, suffering great grief for your service,

"JACQUELINE."

It was impossible for Glocester to resist such appeals as these. On the receipt of this letter, delivered into his hands in London by the faithful Ludwick Van Monfoort, he gave himself no time for reflection or scruple. He at once made up his mind to accompany the bold Hollander to a proposed meeting with Jacqueline and the Bishop of Utrecht, which she did not venture to allude to in her written communication, but entrusted to Van Monfoort's verbal announcement, and which her secret departure from Mons with her mother enabled her to effect. The rough but honest eloquence of Van Monfoort made great impression on the lord protector; and the picture presented to him of

Jacqueline's heroic endurance of all the ills that beset her, caused him keen pangs of remorse, that he could only hope to allay by a prompt measure of generosity towards her. He immediately summoned the Earl of Salisbury and Lord Fitz-walter to a secret council. The former of these, inflamed with jealousy against Philip of Burgundy, was anxiously longing for the protector's orders to set out with a powerful armament, some time in preparation for another invasion of Hainault. But it still required delay to make ready an expedition on so large a scale. All, therefore that could for the moment be done, was to despatch the advanced guard of three thousand men, in itself an important reinforcement, under the command of Fitz-walter, to aid the efforts of Bishop Zweder and the Hoeks, in Holland or Zealand, as might appear best, and strike a grand blow before Philip's preparations for invasion were complete, or that Bedford could interfere in England to prevent this co-operation.

Fitz-walter's heart throbbed with a joy as strong, but less fierce, than Salisbury's; but it was much lessened by Glocester's intimation, as soon as Salisbury retired, that he meant himself to precede the expedition along with Fitz-walter, to meet Jacqueline and the bishop in the proposed rendezvous of the Zeven-volden, and frankly explain to her whom he had so much and so long neglected, the circumstances which prevented him from personally acting in her cause. This generous impulse he resolved, with his usual impetuosity, to carry into effect at once, and to set out without trusting himself to the dangers of a parting interview with Elinor, his courage being strong enough to make him separate from her, but not sufficient to let him meet her dissuasions, her reproaches, or her tears. For the influence she had by this time gained over him was almost boundless whenever she was in his presence; and even when absent, Glocester was in the worst species of slavery to this artful and impassioned enthusiast, for he

firmly believed in her magical skill, and that she held him bound to her by some spell of sorcery, with Bolingbroke's aid, still stronger than the obligation of his oath, or the links of passion.

What private feelings influenced Fitz-walter's dissatisfaction at the protector's decision to accompany him, may be seen hereafter; but whatever they were, he had now no time to brood over them, in the rapid bustle of departure. The troops, which had been for some days waiting ready in the ships, were in another day at sea; while Glocester, Fitz-walter, and Van Monfoort, in the fast sailing brigantine which had borne the latter to England, were already before the wind, in direct course for the Zuyder Zee.

Just before Glocester put his foot on board the brigantine, he despatched a missive to Elinor, telling her (for he dared not quite conceal plans which he believed she had power to divine) of his hasty voyage and its object, announcing that Ven Monfoort's castle in the isle

of Urk was his first point of destination, expressing his hope that Bolingbroke would arrive before his return with the pope's rescript, and winding up with vows of eternal love and fidelity. The missive despatched by a trusty messenger, and another sent to the chief counsellors of state, informing them of his absence for a few days, but without naming for what place, Glocester wrapped his cloak around him, and stepped on the vessel's deck, threw a glance at the receding shores of England, and entrusted himself to the winds and waves.

On the night of the day on which we left Glocester and Fitz-walter departing with Van Monfoort, from the memorable meeting in the Zeven-volden, and before the first and last named had reached Urk, while Fitz-walter proceeded to the encounter of the English troops, three other persons had arrived at the island, in an English ship, which had followed as fast as it could sail the one that had carried Glocester. Two of the three persons were females, the third

a man of dark and dismal mien, who being spokesman for the party, demanded of the rude household of Van Monfoort's castle refreshment and lodging, in the name of the Protector of England, for whom he announced himself as the bearer of important letters, and for whose return to the island with its chieftain he, as well as his companions, expressed great anxiety. But this strong claim on hospitality was not needed by Van Monfoort's seneschal, nor the rough band, half soldiers, half pirates, who held garrison in the absence of their lord. The name of stranger was enough in those rude times and latitudes to ensure the best cheer and warmest welcome of such a feudal den ; and the sight of woman was a still stronger warrant for the hospitality of those wild retainers of a spurred and belted knight, who felt themselves a consequent portion of the chivalry which he represented in his sea-girded fief.

The island of Urk, in the dreary waters of the Zuyder Zee, was little better than a re-

fuge for its fierce chieftain when he found the continent too hot, for native smugglers and neutral pirates, and for the prodigious flights of water-fowl which hovered on its strand or floated on its little creeks and streamlets. The gloomy air of its low and dark-wooded shores was rendered still more so by the time-worn towers of the chieftain's castle which rose among the trees and the few scattered huts of his amphibious vassals. It seemed a place formed for the resort of mystery and guilt; and the scene which was quickly acted by the three strangers could nowhere have found a more fitting theatre than in the dank and dismal chamber where their coarse refreshments were served up.

Stretched on a rude couch and wrapped in a rich mantle of embroidered silk, her head supported by her hand, her attitude expressive of extreme languor, her face pale, her hair dishevelled, and her features shewing painful efforts at recovery from the effects of her voyage, lay a young woman—such a one as we

have described in the opening of this chapter, except that the vague longings of enthusiasm which distinguished her air when an inexperienced girl, were now changed for the marked expression of initiated guilt, and the bold mien of mingled triumph and remorse. Such was Elinor Cobham in the meridian hour of her criminal passion, and when making the most strenuous effort for that greatness which was the long-sought meed of its indulgence. That absorbing object was not, however, to be accomplished by the mere wishes or prayers of an exhausted victim of fatigue and sickness ; neither did the appearance of her two associates promise a consummation more likely to be produced by courtly or kingly influence, or the workings of political intrigues.

Squatted on a low stool, at the foot of Elinor's couch, and close to a moveable brazier, which was filled with burning charcoal, was a woman, advanced in years, of haggard and

withered mien, and dressed in such a suit of dubious material and make, as was appropriate to a person of the all but lower class, or Borel people as they were then called, who was nevertheless the admitted—and unhallowed—confidant of a prince's mistress. Her whole attire and manner spoke her for one of those convenient agents, always ready at the call of secret sin, to do the offices which wedded virtue shrinks not to confide to the male practitioners of science—one, in short, who could safely aid to bring an innocent pledge of guilty love into the world, and who would assist on occasion to remove to another, the victim of some darker passion. There was, besides, about this beldam tokens that she acknowledged another calling, and that so far from feeling it necessary to conceal, she was employed in some act which made it essential that she should avow it; for she bore the insignia of witchcraft—a red leather girdle, with unholy hieroglyphics, being buckled round the waist of her dark blue kirtle, and a leaden

figure of St. Catherine (who was profanely forced into the patronage of the art) suspended by a black collar on her breast. Her eyes were fixed, with all the ardent intensity of feigned or fancied inspiration, on the antique brass skillet in which she stirred some posset-drink; while she muttered between her skinny lips words, inaudible even to the deluded creature who anxiously watched the process from her uneasy couch.

In a far corner of the apartment sat a man, whose dark countenance and sombre dress assorted well with the haze thrown round him by the smoke of a clumsy lamp suspended by a cord from the ceiling, and emitting an almost stifling effluvia and suffocating vapour from the villanous oil which fed its wick of twisted hemp. An oaken table, with legs rudely carved into shapes meant for the resemblance of dolphins, was before this murky individual, who occasionally stooped to pore over the parchment-scrolls that lay scattered on it, together

with some old fashioned instruments and utensils of forbidden arts, or flung himself back at times into the recess of his ponderous wooden chair. The dress of this person announced him of the ecclesiastical order, but as one whose holy functions where for a while suspended. His doublet and courtpie, a species of close mantle, were of sad-coloured cloth; but his hood was of the more clerical shade of black, and sloped over the brow diagonally in the fashion peculiar to churchmen. His beard fell on his breast, his lank hair lay on his shoulders, and a belt of leather, studded with strange and mystic figures in relief, proclaimed him as occupied in studies of astrology, alchymy, or medicine, for it was symbolic of any of those professions rather than that of divinity, to which, at first glance, the man might have been supposed exclusively to belong.

A profound silence was for a long time observed by the trio thus situated. The simmering bubble of the posset was the only sound

within the room that broke this awful stillness, for Elinor stifled her sighs of impatient anxiety, and the throbbings of her heart were only audible to herself. The courts and corridors of the castle were quite noiseless, for the seneschal and his warders, who alone of the household had not retired to rest at sunset, kept watch in an out-tower for the expected return of their lord and his guests, whose rank was unknown to all but the seneschal, that it might not become a matter of curiosity by any unusual preparations of ceremony. Without the walls of the castle, the low rustling of the wind among the trees, and the distant murmur of the tide, kept up a monotonous and dismal accompaniment to the silent scene within. Elinor Cobham had been long accustomed to stolen snatches of such unhallowed pursuits as that which was now going on. Bolingbroke had often practised his art before her, for her, and on her; and Margery Jourdain had many times assisted in the concoction of the spells over

which he presided ; but on every former occasion the scene of these doings had been England. Elinor had felt herself to be in the security of her father's house, or of that which the liberality of her royal paramour had subsequently made her own. She had heretofore rather considered herself as an enchantress served by her familiars: now she was as one possessed by demons, and subservient to the very fiends she had the power to raise—a slave to the terrible beings who seemed to do her service.

The bleak and desolate spot, the wild mansion, the desperate retainers who received and lodged her, the fact of being for the first time in her life in a strange land, her helpless and forlorn situation, if treachery indeed *were* meant her—for such misgivings had crossed her mind —all made her acutely sensible to the value of the home she had abandoned, and the enjoyments of her native land, the first of which she had forfeited for ever, and to none of which she might ever again return. Her distracted

imagination, always actively tormenting, pictured to her a thousand probabilities of ill. Glocester's exhausted passion, his determination to make away with her, and leave himself free; the ready confederacy of those who seemed to be her agents, but might become her assassins; perpetual imprisonment in this lone castle; death in its agonizing variety of shapes; the dark mysteries of magic; the populous world of demons and devils, into whose secrets she had so longed, so striven, to plunge—all rose before her, and danced in a maze of feverish distraction.

The terrible silence maintained by the sorcerer and the hag was becoming at length too much for sufferance. Elinor felt a flush shoot now and then athwart her fair brow and breast, like meteor corruscations in a moon-lit sky. Her head began to throb with sudden pangs, her breath came short and thick, her hands tingled and burned; she felt convulsive spasms of nerve; her eyes seemed to swim in fire; she

laboured, as it were, by the main force of her hands to keep herself collected and still; she doubled her fingers like the talons of a bird, as though they grasped some tangible support; she set her teeth together and sternly closed her eyes, from which, however, she could force no tear. She would have sprung up, and leaped at once from the agony of this endurance into the worst certainty of fate, had not anxiety in the all-important process on which her companions were avowedly employed, proved stronger than even the suffering which we have but faintly painted, and kept her in the forced stillness of intense ambition.

At length the old cracked bell, which hung in the damp belfry of the chapel, close to the castle walls, struck the first toll of midnight. The sound, as any sound would have been, was an inexpressible relief to Elinor. "Oh God!" murmured she, in an under breath of infinite enjoyment, as if a load were heaved from her heart.

" Some other word, fair mistress, an' it please you," muttered the beldam, with a scowl; " had *that* been said aloud, our labour was marred for the moon's next quarter."

Elinor raised her head, cast a fearful glance towards Bolingbroke, to discover if he had caught her incautious apostrophe; but he gave no sign of consciousness, and she sank again on the couch.

CHAPTER II.

Eleven more hoarse and cheerless chimes spoke out the hour's completion.

"How works the charm, Dame Margery?" asked the hollow voice of the sorcerer. Elinor thrilled convulsively at its deep tone, while the beldam replied,

> "The spell works well,
> 'Twas mixed in —"

Elinor's accustomed ear supplied the rhymed cadence, which the hag did not completely pronounce, but mumbled with an indistinct sound, between a chuckling laugh and a spiteful imprecation.

"Hast stirred it as ordered, gossip?"

"Thrice times three rounds, in inverted motion of the left hand, my master."

"'Tis well! shake in the mandrake apples' rind, preserved by the recipe of Ernestus Burgranius."

A bubbling noise in the mixture told that a new ingredient was added.

"Does it work, Mother Jourdain?" asked Bolingbroke.

"The yellow froth rises towards the edge," replied the hag.

"Excellent well! Now the curled hair of a wolf's tail, found good by the Sage Mizaldus. I hear it fizz, Dame Margery. Stir, stir it round the skillet. Now let a swallow's liver feed the charm! The dust of a dove's heart! Scrapings from asses' hoof! 'tis learned Rebeus's remedy. Is all in, dame? does it work?"

"The posset is gluey and unctuous—it boils to the brim, good Master Bolingbroke."

"Then sparingly sprinkle the master-portion

of the charm, the divine powder, the pulverized specific; three pinches, dame; now stir, quick, quick, ere the skillet o'erflows."

A black smoke rose up as this item was added, and the beldam laughed outright with joy, at seeing her work go on so bravely.

"Cover the skillet, Margery, and keep the posset to a gentle simmer; the philter is complete!" exclaimed the wizard, while Elinor again started up, and a fervent glow of hope for the success of this potent preparation flushed through her frame.

"Would that his grace were come," cried she, aloud. "Kind Bolingbroke, runs he no risk? Is he safe to-night?"

"If the stars spell aright, and I can rightly read them, gentle Elinor, Duke Humphrey runs no risk on flood or field; he is doomed to die in his bed."

"And *quietly*, Bolingbroke! oh, say so, for love of my good lord—or of me, Bolingbroke?"

"Elinor, I may not now dissert too deeply on

his destiny. But his horoscope lies before me, and violence, heats, and contention, in life and death, are on its very face, like spots on the moon's disk. Ask me not more by those keen looks and moving gestures: I am not called to speak on signs of death to-night—'tis for love, sweet Elinor, and thine honour's rise that I watch and work."

"Yet Glocester is dear to me, Bolingbroke! Tell me, oh! tell me by the virtue of thine art, will his life run smoothly on? His fate is mine —and the fierce duke Philip sharpens the hostile sword. What hangs o'er his grace's head —life or death?"

"Death!—nay, start not from the couch, too-anxious Elinor—all men must die—or soon or late; but Glocester runs no instant peril—so calm thee. Art comforted, sweet wench?"

"Thy voice has ever a strange power over me, Bolingbroke, and never so much as now. I believe I am more calm, but still not sure that I ought to be so. These promised honours may

escape me after all. Is the duke surely safe? Say thy say boldly—I can bear the worst."

"Nay, press me not."

"Thy skill is mighty.—Speak out, for in his safety is mine own enwrapped—look to the horoscope again!"

"Well, since thou wilt be wiser than is wotting—what may I read to-night? Let's see, let's see! What's now in the ascendant? who is lord of the conjunction? The meeting of Saturn and the moon in Scorpio argues ill, and when the black choler rises to the brain—humph! What says Jovianus? Mercury in any geniture, if he be found in Virgo or Pisces, his opposite sign, irradiated by those quartile aspects of Saturn or Mars, the man runs risk. Ha, ha! Again: he that hath Saturn and Mars, the one culminating, the other in the fourth house—Indeed! Pernicious humours mounting. So! Let's turn to Ranzovinus and Albubater, on this head? Patience, Elinor, patience awhile!"

Here Bolingbroke turned over and over the

mystical leaves before him, while Elinor, restless and nervous, listened for the renewal of his jargon, and fixed her eyes on him with a fascinated gaze.

"Will my fair Lady Elinor, an' bless her! the Duchess that will be soon, sip another taste of her cordial?" asked Dame Jourdain, carefully stirring the while the charmed philter.

"E'en as thou wilt, Margery—my blood burns, and I must drink again, though methinks the draught is over potent."

"Not so, not so, i' faith—'tis but mulled Malvoisie, my lady, with the juice of a pomegranate squeezed therein, a taste of rose-water, and some drops of Borage essence, the genuine draught to calm heroical love and its phantasies. 'Twas mixed by Master Bolingbroke's own hands, and on the recipe of the great Araby doctor."

"I know it, Margery," said Elinor; and added in a low tone, "and I too am in his hands, to be mixed and worked on at his will.—Give me the tankard!" and Elinor drank again

of the mixture, which she had freely partaken of before, whose effects were mounting already to her brain.

"Have you often felt his hand, Elinor?" asked Bolingbroke's deep, uncadenced voice.

"Have I! ah, Bolingbroke, thou knowest I have pressed it oft and oft in mine."

"It shall be thine own by wedded rites, Elinor!"

"Assure me of that, and the fattest abbot of England shall not be half so well provided for as thou, my deep-learned friend!"

"Hast thou marked closely, Elinor, whether the saturnine, epatick, and natural lines intersect each other, or make a gross triangle in his palm?"

"In sooth, good Bolingbroke, whenever Glocester's hand was in mine own, I never sought for tokens of chiromancy, but gave back the ardent pressure without any trick of art."

"If signs like these are there, the learned Corvinus lays it down such men are doomed for care, and disquietude, loss of honor, banishment, and forfeitures."

"What dismal noise was that?" cried Elinor, starting from the couch.

"'Twas but the screech-owl, flapping at the light that shines through the high casement."

"Again! how loud it flaps! I like not this —'tis an ill omen, Bolingbroke—good cannot be in the breeze that sends out the night-birds to shriek over the charm thou hast been working. 'The ill-facte owl and leather-winged batte are death's messengers' you know.

> "'The hoarse night-raven, trompe of doleful dreere
> The ruefull strich still wayting on the beere,
> The whistler shrill, that whoso hears doth die,'

are these the heralds of Glocester's safety? Oh, Bolingbroke, give me some comforting assurance that all will be well! Methinks a ducal coronet, diamond-gemmed, hangs over my brow, but fades away in the lamp's vapour.—Speak to me, by the mystery of thy spells.—Canst thou not yet raise spirits, Bolingbroke?—'Twould make me marvellous glad to hear words from the nether world.—Begin the conjuration, gentle Bolingbroke! fair I cannot call thee, in sooth

—though surely thou meanest me fair?—Call up a spirit for me—tutor mine! Oh, my brain!" An indistinct smile played across Elinor's lips as these somewhat incoherent words passed them; while Mother Jourdain turned towards the wizard with a longing leer, and exclaimed,

"Shall we begin, my master? Are your studies ripe? How runs the incantation? *Conjurote! Adzum*, and *Asmath!*"

"Peace, withered beldam! Darest *thou* sport with the dark words of fate? Not even *my* skill can yet summon up the people of the shades. I wear no enchanter's cap, like King Erricus, nor does elf or goblin yet acknowledge me for master. No, Elinor, not *yet*, my precious one, may I practice aught but what is learned from the stars and the mysteries of upper earth—but ere long thou shalt know more, when I know all a mortal may. Meantime, to ease thy troubled mood, Margery shall chant the night-spell.—Recite, Dame Jourdain!

but let the philter simmer well the while—'twill lose no force from the charmed words—Begin !"

The beldam made some mystic sign with her left hand, but not that which a pious catholic signifies as the type of salvation, and she chanted in a low but nasal twang—

"Who sains the house o' dight ?
They that sain it ilka night.
The new born bratte,
The dark spot catte,
The wizard's spare,
Keep this house from the weir !
From rennyng thief,
From brennyng thief,
From an ill rae
That by the gate can gae,
And from an ill wighte,
That by the house can lighte
Nine roods about, in dark or light,
Keep it all the night.
This is the spell
That shields us well ;
This is the charm
That smothers harm !"

While Margery Jourdain snuffled slowly out this unchristian exorcism, Elinor's mind flew back, on the rail-road grooves of memory,

to those early days when her ladye mother made her repeat at bed-time the rhyme of the white paternoster, or the litany verses—

> "Mary, mother, wel thou be;
> Mary, mother, think on me.
> Swete ladye, mayden milde,
> From al foemen thou me schilde.
> Both by day, eke by nighte,
> Helpe me, mayden, by thy mighte.
> Swete ladye, for me pray to Heven's King,
> To give me housel, shrifte, and gode bredinge."

and as those unbidden recollections of childhood and innocence rose up, the hapless girl pressed her hands across her eyes, and felt the warm tears gushing out against her burning palms.

"Rest thee now satisfied, sweet Elinor," said Bolingbroke, as the old woman ended her chant. "Nothing of evil may now bring harm to the walls that shelter us, till the cock crows and the spirits of night are sunk in the bowels of the earth, or blended invisible with the morning vapours. We may not raise nor lay them, but we can keep them still."

"Lie quiet, my lady duchess. The comforting draught must do you marvellous service, and fit you well to meet his highness when he quaffs the philter. Lie quiet, fair paragon—my thumbs prick, he cannot be far off," said Dame Jourdain.

"Oh, Bolingbroke, what rushing sound is that?" cried Elinor, heedless of the beldam's words. "I hear them in the air—are the forbidden beings on the wing? Hast thou indeed called them to our aid, or do they come unasked—perhaps in wrath and for our punishment?—Hist! How awful the sound careers past the casement!"

"'Tis nought but the gyral flight of the water-fowl, frightened from the castle's moat, too sensitive Elinor. Fear not, sweet heart, be calm and collected, for mayhap indeed 'its Glocester's coming that has roused the web-footed tribe to sound this needless alarm."

"Glocester coming! Heavens! how that

sound thrills through me fearfully—and for the first time! It used to awake but joy and triumph."

"And why not now?" said Bolingbroke, in a tone meant to be re-assuring, but which was only harsh and grating to Elinor's consciousness of wrong; "now, when thy power is on the point of full accomplishment? when thy royal, ay, Elinor, thine all but *regal* lover is about to be secured to thee for ever?"

"That thought is the cause of my heart's heaviness, Bolingbroke. Will he indeed be mine, or is he not even now false, perjured to his oaths, another's? Oh, my best counsellor, how my heart misgives me!"

"All will be well—all *is* well, Elinor. Thinkest thou these precious leaves, imbued with the spirit of wisdom, have cost me years of study for nought but thy undoing? Have I toiled at all the mystic arts, to be a plaything in Fate's fingers? Am I, who worked on even the proud pontiff's power as thou could'st play

on thy lute, to be baffled by ill-fate, or made the sport of chance? No, daughter fair, no, precious one, thou'st nought to fear. Glocester is coming, and coming to be thine.—Hey, Margery Jourdain! asleep on thy post?—Dost nod over the skittle that holds the fate of an empire's lord? Art thou dreaming, mistress?"

"The foul fiend take thee before thy time for the dishonouring thought, black Bolingbroke!" exclaimed the choleric old crone, roused from her nodding attitude of incipient slumber by the sorcerer's harsh words, and violently resuming her task of care-taking to the charmed philter.

"Ha! gossip, dost thou curse?" cried he, in still harsher phrase. "Dost let thy foul tongue run truant, and 'gainst *me?*—Hast thou no fear of cramps?—do the pinching cholic and the night-spasms hold no terrors for thee? What! muttering still, beldam?—thou provokest thy fate—then hear it!"

With these words Bolingbroke rose from his

chair, and seizing a white wand, which lay by his side, he stalked forward, waving this rod of office over his head. Old Margery, terrified at the threatened burst of imprecation, and wholly subjected to a pretended power, which superstition and habit made her cling to in fear, even while conscious of its unreal nature, quickly rose from her stool, and threw herself on her knees before the tall figure which so awfully approached.

"Pardon, pardon, gentle master!" cried she. "May St. Colm and St. Bride—"

"Name me no saints, insolent crone!" cried the sorcerer. "Wouldst have me crush thee?"

"Alas, master! I misthought me of your calling, and my mind turned back to early days, when I have seen you serve the altar and sing the saints' litany."

"Peace, thou perverse one, peace! or I'll rack thee. Dost talk to me of things like these?" vociferated Bolingbroke, a dark blush giving a livid tinge to his brow.

"Pardon, pardon!" said the old hag, covering her face with her hands, and bending her head to the earth.

"Oh, Bolingbroke, what would you do? How terrible your eyes gleam on poor Margery! Be appeased—remember what work you have in hand!" exclaimed Elinor, rising from the couch and throwing a dissuasive look on the angry wizard, while one of her snowy hands rested on his shoulder.

"How durst the old hag call me *black* Bolingbroke? or twit me with my by-gone days of altar-service? But thy bright eyes and melting tones, my Elinor, have mastered me, and dammed up the torrent of curses which I would have poured out."

"Mercy, mercy!" muttered the prostrate hag.

"Rise up, Margery, and learn discretion," said Bolingbroke, in a softened growl, turned by Elinor's seductive words and looks, even

from the angry heat of wounded vanity and a stung conscience.

"List, list!" cried Elinor, clinging to the embodied type of darkness in renewed terror, or distinguishing the plaintive, yet unmelodious tone of some instrument sounded from without the castle. "Bolingbroke, that is no earthly sound—'tis not the scream of birds, nor is it mortal melody—Jesu Maria shield us!"

"Thou choosest most marvellously ill thy calls for aid to-night, even wert thou not secure from harm," said Bolingbroke, with a mortified and malicious air; "these adjurations would better suit some vesper-chaunting nun or cowled friar at lauds or complin, than one who ——"

"Oh, say not what I am, good Bolingbroke! Reproach me not for what thou thyself hast made me—be merciful as thou art potent—these awful tones, this desolate place, a sense of my helplessness, and fear that I cannot master or define, overpower me quite.—Hark! again—louder and nearer!"

" 'Tis the gong—the wild horn of the north —'tis Van Monfoort sounding his own and Glocester's summons to the castle watch-tower.— I hear it distinctly now, and know it well.— How now, good Elinor, thou tremblest!"

" It is not from fear, good Bolingbroke, though I do dread the Duke's reproach for this perhaps too daring step—but hope, too, shakes my nerves—shall I be——"

" Duchess? Ay, my girl, and fate might make thee—"

" Queen!" chimed in the beldame parasite, who had recovered from her alarm, and taken her place again beside the brazier.

" Hush! they approach! list to the draw-bridge creaking on its rusty chains. To thy couch, Elinor. Be cautious, Margery; doff thy girdle and collar, old girl; look matronly, and speak not in the terms of art. And now, lie ye all by awhile, my treasures! safe covered from unbelieving eyes—my belt, too, I depose and hide with ye. Let Glocester meet me now,

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his humble messenger, and see who is the stronger of the twain!"

While Bolingbroke muttered this half colloquy half monologue, he carefully spread his mantle over the manuscript and instruments that lay on the table. He then walked across the chamber, opened the door which he had secured by its massive bolt, and walked to encounter the duke and prepare him for his ulterior purpose. Elinor threw herself back on the couch, in a state of unwonted perturbation; and her eyes seemed to fix involuntarily on the mysterious skillet, the handle of which was again grasped by the witch, while the gentle bubble of its simmering contents, was once more the only sound that broke the silence of the spacious and solemn-looking apartment.

CHAPTER III.

Glocester and Van Monfoort having put Fitz-walter ashore, and made some reconnoitring visits to several points of the mainland coast of Holland, turned the prow of their open boat towards Urk; and the six sturdy rowers who by turns pulled them through the waves, or managed the broad and clumsy sail of red canvass, obeying well the movements of the rudder, which was held by Ludwick himself, the island was safely made, but not till the moon had sunk low in the water, and midnight had spread its

gloomy mantle on the world. It was indeed the rude horn of Giles Postel that had announced the coming of his lord, by the blast which was appropriate to his feudal rights; and the due answer from the seneschal and warders completed the preliminary formalities which preceded the landing of the chief, and his entrance into the court of his strong-hold.

"Welcome again, Lord Duke, into the lion's den!" said Van Monfoort, with a grim smile, as the flambeaux of the warders lighted them over the drawbridge.

"Our Lady grant that I come well out once more, as Daniel did of old!"

"Why, how, my lord? You fear no guile across the threshold of a true knight?" abruptly exclaimed Ludwick, looking more angry than even his words or tone implied, and giving that peculiar jerk, which was noticed on his first introduction to our readers, and which brought the hilt of his huge rapier into ready contact with his hand.

"Guile, good Sir Ludwick! no, by my troth, not from thee or thine, as knighthood and honour be my meed! But, beshrew my heart, good gossip, if I did not shake and shiver as I crossed the moat, in a way which makes me think some ill-grained genii guard this castle of thine."

"Ah! for that, your highness, I am not held accountable by any main canon or bye-law of chivalry. Devils and demons may defy the votaries of belt and brand—but you, duke, are the first, friend or foe, who has given my father's hall a bad name."

"Nay, good Sir Ludwick—"

"Nay, good my lord, but it is true. You have thrown a slur over the castle of the Monfoorts, duly dedicate to St. Willebrod, whose statue stands in a niche over the chapel-door, blessed by the last but one bishop of Guildres, and every three months visited by the holy canon Rudolf Van Diepenholt. But that I hold you, duke, the future liege lord of this my

fief, in right of my sovereign countess, your affianced wife, I should not pass this slight so lightly—for let it be known to your highness that the descendant of Hendrick of Urk sprung from the eldest kings of Denmark, the inheritor of Dirk Van Zwieten, his mother's brother, the ally of blood as noble as Plantagenet's."

"Why, Sir Ludwick, what means all this? By my halidome there *is* something not aright that hovers over us, and has struck you with phrensy as well as me with doubt! What form is that?"

As Glocester started back, amazed and alarmed at the object which caused this exclamation, Van Monfoort turned his eyes in the same direction, and muttered a rapid sentence of exorcism, crossing himself at the same time with his clenched fist, and bowing devoutly in systematic reverence to the power he invoked, without having one fixed or tangible notion of its nature or extent. It was the dark figure of Bolingbroke stalking forward that caused this double alarm.

As soon as Glocester recognised him, he whispered, just loud enough for Van Monfoort to hear—

"In God's sooth, good Ludwick, I was not quite astray—but I must admit it was mine own evil genius of which I had warning, and not that of thee or thine. Hey! Bolingbroke," continued the duke, aloud, and in English, "what does this bode? Hast followed me, so close and quick, for weal or for woe? How speeds my Elinor? 'Tis she has given you note of my movements, and sent you to my care-taking? And from Rome, what tidings? Open your wallet of news, or good or ill.

"If your gracious highness would vouchsafe to honour me with speech of you alone, that is to say, freed from the presence of this company," answered Bolingbroke, with a significant look cast round on Van Monfoort and his suite, "I would then reveal the tidings of my mission and shew your grace the evidence of my noble Lady Elinor's well-doing. An' it please your

highness, I beseech you to dismiss this rude attendance on your royal person, and let your poor servitor lead you to the apartment containing documents, and living proofs withal, of what most touches your interests and your honour."

"*Living* proofs, Master Bolingbroke! There is some meaning in that word that's deeper than my craft.—What would you lead me to?"

"Good my lord, come this way—I pray you do, before this brigand-looking host of ours and his fierce retainers get scent of my errand, or he learns who is my gossip on this perilous voyage for your highness's good service."

Bolingbroke accompanied this urgent entreaty by supplicating gestures, and gradually moved towards the entrance of the building. Gloucester felt irresistibly impelled to obey his entreaties, and by a few words of apology to Van Monfoort, excused himself for withdrawing with the stranger. The lion, for all his courage, was completely appalled by the presence of this

walking mystery; and he gladly assented to Glocester's movement, which relieved him from the company of the being whom the duke had so freely admitted to be one of evil agency as well as aspect. As Glocester disappeared in one of the faintly-lighted passages leading from the hall, with Bolingbroke by his side pointing out the way, the chieftain could not but shudder at the analogy they formed to some dark spirit leading a sinner to the gloomy abyss. He stood still and mute while he heard their footsteps retiring along the flagged corridor, and thrilled as the loud sound of a closed door, and the shooting of the heavy bolts inside, told that Glocester was fastened in, with one who seemed but the foul fiend in mortal shape.

The old seneschal came to his master's relief, by quickly informing him that two women were the companions of the stranger, whose mysterious air had excited such general feelings of superstitious dread. Ludwick's misgivings on account of his guest rapidly shifted from super-

natural to human temptations, and an undefined doubt of Glocester's fidelity to his mistress, Jacqueline, took forcible possession of the chieftain's mind. To counteract in every way any possible perfidy, was his first determination, and his next half-formed resolution was to break by force into the apartment, which might be dedicated to disgrace and dishonour. But a moment's reflection turned him from this notion. Hospitality, knightly courtesy, and the sacred halo thrown around royalty in the dense atmosphere of feudal feeling, all combined to prevent the outrageous intrusion; and Ludwick contented himself with resolving to obtain a full explanation on the morrow, of a proceeding which seemed so extraordinary and indecorous, to use the mildest epithets of his mind's vocabulary that could be adapted to the circumstances.

With this resolve he retired to the rude accommodations of his sleeping-place; first seeing that all was right in the chamber of honour

appropriated to Glocester, placing his night-mixture ready at hand, leaving the seneschal and Giles Postel to the duties of attendance in his ante-room, but holding himself exempted from personal waiting, by the abruptness with which the duke retired, and for the purpose of collecting his own somewhat scattered ideas to meet the exigencies of the case.

We may not expect to describe the combined sensations that rushed on Glocester, when he entered the hall into which he was ushered by his dark conductor. Surprise and joy, at the presence of her who had so bound herself round his heart, were mixed with keen remorse at the sudden recollection of the forsaken Jacqueline, a pang of comparison between the two objects so unfavourable to the one before him, and a superstitious alarm at the sight of her and her satellites, to which even his valiant heart was not invulnerable. His rapid glance seemed to take in at once the whole combinations of the scene, and he felt

overpowered by the conviction of his enthralment in an united web of love and magic. Elinor gave him no time to recover his presence of mind; nor did the first impulse of her feelings allow her to act on her own. Forgetting totally the part she had to play, impelled only by her delight at seeing the object of her varied anxieties, both for herself and him, she sprang forward, with a throb of united affection, security, and triumph; and in the wildness of sentiment—not uninfluenced by the draught so artfully prepared to aid its excitement—she flung herself with hysteric rapture into the arms of her royal paramour. At the same instant Bolingbroke slowly stole from the hall into an adjoining closet, while his beldame associate at his beckon hobbled out, with a grin of mingled malice, envy, and other as odious combinations—leaving the impassioned pair totally lost to a sense of all but their criminal joy. And never did guilty love enjoy a moment of more redeeming sincerity. The

reciprocity of deep delight shrouded for an instant a long course of mutual guile. Deception was dead, except in its action on the heart of each self-deluded lover; and they stood for awhile locked in an embrace, which they might be at once pitied and pardoned for believing to be as pure as it was in reality profane.

Nor must the erring son of frail humanity shudder with pious horror at this picture of his fellow-sinner's abandonment to the exquisite delusion. Let him rather hope it was a merciful respite granted by offended Heaven, to soothe the fever of unholy passion. And, at any rate, the most obdurate moralist may be satisfied on referring to the page of history, that Glocester and Elinor paid in after days of suffering an ample penalty for this and similar moments of self-forgetfulness.

"Nell! my precious Nell!" murmured Glocester after awhile, drawing back as if to gaze more intently on his mistress's flushed and animated features.

"What would my gracious lord?" replied Elinor in a subdued and softened tone.

"What would I? Nought, by Heaven! but to be for ever thus happy in thy arms."

"For ever, my good lord? Beware the sin of exaggeration. Ever is a long word!"

"No, Nell, time is but a span. Eternity itself were brief as the lightning's flash, could love and beauty fill man's grasp for ever."

"Ah, flattering prince! how many hours have flown by since you proffered these same horrid words to—Jacqueline?"

"Nell, sweet Nell! do, precious wench, but let me be happy awhile.—Dash not this sweet draught of bliss with gall—i'faith, I love thee —thee only!"

"Ah, my lord, forgive me! but your truant flight—this hurried voyage—which I, it may be, have too rashly dared to follow and pry into—"

"No, no, my bellibone, thou hast done well —very well. I ask not why or wherefore thou

hast come—I wish to believe it, as all things of thy doing, an act of pure affection—doubt not me then, more than I do thee."

"How could your highness doubt a poor and owly creature, who has done all that woman may do to prove her heart's fealty? But you, my lord—"

"Why how's this, Nell? Let me look on thee awhile! Thou art neither red-haired nor black-eyed; the sure signs of jealousy in woman. These smooth brown tresses and these full grey orbs, speak loving tenderness and confiding faith. Nor art thou clad in weeds of doubtingness. This mantle of rose-coloured, inwoven silk, should not cover mistrust. Fitter would be a robe of disbelieving yellow or forsaken green—or a watchet velvet gown, pierced with oylet holes and stuck with needles, the true types of jealousy, such as my late brother King Henry, when madcap Prince of Wales, wore on a visit of reproach to our royal father for his suspicious temper. And wouldest thou,

my own Nell, in this bright hour of joyance, poison my bliss, and crucify thy soul with like heartburnings?"

"Ah, good my lord, this mingled tone of seriousness and banter, leaves me more in doubt than before."

"Mark ye, my precious one, the words of the old adage: 'From heresie, frenzie and jealousie, good Lord save us?' or know ye the good old rhymes—

> 'Windes, weapons, flames, make not such hurle-burlie,
> As jealous women turn all topsie-turvie?'

Why did you ever love me, Nell, if love was but to breed suspicion?"

"In good sooth, my lord, I can but answer with Geoffrey Chaucer's Wife of Bath—

> 'I followed aye my inclination
> By virtue of my constellation;'

And again I may say with the rhymester, that she who loves like as I do—

> 'May no while in confidence abide
> Who is assaid on every side;'

And oh ! knows not your highness that she who has Venus and Leo in her horoscope is, when the Moon and Virgo be mutually aspected?"

" Hold, hold thee there, good Nell, in very mercy ! Oh, what a dolt I was to lead thee on to rhymes or star-learning !"

As Glocester thus exclaimed, he loosed his embrace of Elinor, and giving way to his passionate temper he paced the room impatiently, volubly running on as follows—

" Thou art not just towards me, Nell.—Thou'st no corival in my love—I merit not this. Were I some lazy loiterer, some hedge-creeper, some dreaming dizard, who, like a decrepit, gnarled old man with shaking joints, a continuous cough and sap dried up, stands aloof from her he loves—Were I as a log or stone—had I a gourd for my head or a pepon for my heart—then indeed thou might'st assail my faith with doubts. But I, who have all given up and nought lamented for thy sake—I, who have eschewed tempta-

tions, braved reproaches—ay, Nell, and smothered conscience for thee, is it meet I should be doubted? But what have we here?—a silk-enwrapped scroll to my address, with a broad seal.—Hey! stamped with the pontiff's own sacred signet! *Virtu Dieu!* I had quite forgotten Bolingbroke and his missive. Ah, Nell, is this no sign of my love for thee? I'll not yet open this rescript; and here again lies a parchment leaf unclosed,—'To Humphrey of Glocester!' Blunt enough! This is private matter—rhyme again!—

'Humphry, who faine would rede
Must fuste need to spel;
Three B's would sting thee ded,
Thy balm lies in an L.
No deth-knell, but a Nell for life—
One is the grave's deep voice, t'other says make me wife!"

Ha! here is no trick of tergitour, no necromantic spell—this speaks plain English. Three B's?—Why, Burgundy, Britanny, and Bedford are the three who would pierce me with

their stings—and a 'Nell for life,' and 'make me wife,' needs no book-learning methinks to understand. Is this thy precious scribbling, Elinor? 'Tis an open asking of the banns, i' faith!"

While Glocester waited for a reply to this question, somewhat sternly put, all his softer emotions were revived by hearing loud sobs from Elinor's couch—the only answer she either could or would give. But we must not stop to analyse what portion of art mixed with the reality of her apparent distress. The lately-checked tenderness of the protector revived at this irresistible appeal of female distress, and he immediately flew to Elinor's side and stiffled her sobs and sighs in amorous caresses.

It was then that he perceived, standing on a high-legged tripod, placed beside the reredost or fire-place, a parcel-gilt goblet of rare workmanship, which he instantly recognised as one he himself had given to Elinor.

"Ah, Nell! but it was kind and like thyself,"

said he, " to bring this token of old times and happy hours to greet me in this wild spot! Well do I remember me the night when I tracked the snow-covered pathway across the meadows from Westminster to Charing, with this cup under my doublet, bought for thee at Pioli's, the Lombard, in Eastcheap. Oft have I drained it ere now from thine own filling, Nell, and I warrant me thou hast bethought thee of my drowthiness this chilly night.—Let's see!"

With these words he took up the goblet, and was going to quaff off the contents, when Elinor started forward and caught his arm, exclaiming—

" Not so, not so, my lord—I must give it you—'tis from my hand alone you must take the draught."

" Good wench!" cried Glocester, with a glowing glance of gratitude at this new proof of his mistress's amiable solicitude; while she, holding out to him the goblet in her left hand, muttered the whilesome set form of rude verses,

the charm required to give the philter full effect.

"What say'st thou, precious one?" asked the thirsty and love-sick duke.

"But a short respondel, good my gracious lord, and most sweet lover," replied Elinor, at the same time handing the cup towards his longing lips. He took it eagerly, and never loosed his hold or drew his breath till he had swallowed the last drop of the potation.

Having never ourselves drank of a love-philter, we cannot undertake to tell precisely the effect internally produced on Glocester by this momentous draught. But its consequence on his conduct and bearing were of a nature most alarming to the terror-stricken girl who had administered the dose. It was not madness that suddenly developed the mind's disease—it was not idiotism that spoke its overthrow. Glocester neither raved or foamed at the mouth, nor exhibited any other sign of actual phrenzy; but there was an instant and undefinable evi-

dence in his every look, word, and movement, that shewed him utterly possessed by the influence of incontrollable passion. The most secret and potent ingredients of those love-draughts of old are happily unknown in the times that be, so that there is no means of bringing to any living test the proof of what is recounted to us of their effects in the days of yore. That in the present instance they were such as to absolutely terrify Elinor is certain, but it was such terror as assails the over-anxious mind, appalled at the fulfilment of its too extravagant desires. Had Glocester owned the world at the moment, it had been laid a free gift at Elinor's feet; but being scarcely master of himself, the offering he made was one of comparative insignificance, and the transfer into Elinor's absolute possession was effected with a facility wonderful to her who set such value on the acquisition, but of no note to him who threw himself away without an effort of either reason or reflection.

The fact we believe to have been that poor

Humphrey of Glocester was in the predicament of many an entrapped libertine of later days; and that the grand measure of ruin, which he now so passively submitted to, was not produced by any means of magic, beyond the blandishments of female beauty, or by any aid of liquid provocations but those common to the various modifications of drunkenness. Be that as it may, his political and moral degradation was consummated on that night. The crafty Bolingbroke was on the watch to seize the fittest moment for re-appearance on the scene. Flinging aside, for a season and a purpose, all the trappings of his unholy callings, he next presented himself, clad in the costume of undefiled priesthood. Glocester, bewildered and beset by irresistible persuasions, repeating by rote words which he could scarcely comprehend, and giving way to inducements which he had no power to combat, was almost, without either his knowledge or consent, married to the woman who had long been his mistress, and was in no possi-

ble point of view suited to be his mate. Bolingbroke was the fitting maker of such a match, and Margery Jourdain the worthy witness of its completion.

We wish to draw a veil over the scene so degrading to a gallant prince, and to the country, whose honour was partially involved in the transaction, as well as to human nature itself, which can so little bear a too close scrutiny. We do not like to picture chivalry and manliliness reeling in dishonouring orgies, or love and religion, two such holy impulses, choked in polluting fumes. We therefore close the scene, and hasten to end the chapter.

When Ludwick van Monfoort arose at dawn on the following morning, big with the intention of keenly questioning his royal guest, he repaired to the ante-room of the chamber of honour, to make inquiries as to the night-proceedings of the castle's inmates, some of whom excited such strange suspicions. He was not a ittle surprised to find Giles Postel and the

seneschal in most unbefitting attitudes of repose. He awoke them with considerable difficulty; and finding no satisfaction in their drowsy confusion, he passed onwards to the bed-room, but found no Glocester there. His next visit was to the hall and the adjoining sleeping nooks, given up to the accommodation of Bolingbroke and his female companions. There a wide scene of vacancy was also presented to the shuddering chieftain, who was at very little loss to account for the disappearance of the duke, considering the nature of the being to whom he had entrusted himself. A renewed attempt at inquiry only increased his alarm, for he found the warders at the gate still more completely overcome with sleep than either the squire or the seneschal, while the very watch-dogs at the outer porch snored in a chorus of most unusual contrast to their general ferocious activity. Ludwick could in fact obtain no satisfaction as to the extraordinary disappearance of his guests. But the over-sleepy guardians, whom he be-

lieved the victims of some spell, acknowledged to each other that the dark stranger had given them a generous portion each of mulled and richly-spiced beverage; and a fisherman, who returned at day-break to the island, asserted that he saw in the dim twilight a strange vessel tacking out to sea against the rough west-wind, with a boldness and skill that appeared uncommon even to a daring adventurer of the Zuyder Zee.

Van Monfoort immediately repaired to his rendezvous with Jacqueline, to attend her to the jay-shooting in South Beveland; after which memorable meeting he never quitted her, as we have already seen, until the night of her adventure in the Castle of Anversfort. It may be supposed that his accounts of what had passed at Urk were not given with any reserve for Glocester's sake; and the doubtful conduct, so veraciously reported, may be well supposed to have sunk deep into Jacqueline's already mortified and wounded feelings.

CHAPTER IV.

The ancient but insignificant town of Hesdin, on the confines of Picardy (to which the progress of our story now requires us to repair,) had presented for some weeks all the bustle, much of the idleness, and no small portion of the vice, without the industry or the intelligence of a capital city. The natives, turned from their usual laborious pursuits and simple habits by the influx of money and the example of expense, either looked with envy on the gay nobles and their

followers, or aped, in their humble sphere, the dazzling extravagance of the court. Lounging at the doors of their little shops, or gaping from the windows of their wooden houses, they followed with wondering eyes the groups of cavaliers and ladies, who were perpetually galloping through the narrow streets. The large profits they made on every object of their petty merchandise, and by the letting of lodgings, added to their pride in the presence of their sovereign, his splendid retinue and distinguished guests, had caused the inhabitants of Hesdin to rank among the happiest and laziest of Duke Philip's subjects. Every day almost was a holiday, and the evenings were passed in conversation on the sports and splendour of the morn.

Adventurers of all kinds crowded from all quarters to this scene of busy idleness. Mountebanks from Brussels, Dijon, and Paris, found a ready road to it. They were privileged visitors, independent of truce or warfare; and foreigners even, if their nominal pursuits were

those of pleasure or martial exercise, passed freely through all quarters of states at open variance with each other. Among the motley crew of this itinerant population, there was a man who shrugged his shoulders and curled his lip with disdain, when the simple burghers and their but half-corrupted wives and daughters held forth in wonder on the magnificence of the equipages, the gallant air of the knights, the beauty of the ladies, and the greatness of their duke. He was a foreigner, who, among many other accomplishments, practised the profession of master-of-arms; for the modern title of fencing-master by no means expresses the variety of modes in which he taught men to cut, and hack, and stab their fellow creatures. The particular occupations of Duke Philip at this period, formerly alluded to, made Hesdin the resort of numerous professors of the noble art of defence and attack, who were sure to find favour, when they chose to seek it, in Philip's eyes. But among them all, none had gained so high a re-

putation for skill and address as Balthazar Spalatro; nor excited so much curiosity, by a line of conduct very unusual with his class. If he was to be believed, he had seen many a grander court, much finer troops, superior knights, and more beautiful women; while he vehemently swore that there was not a single noble of Burgundy, Flanders, or Artois, that knew how to handle a rapier, wield a battle-axe, or poise a lance.

"Then why don't you teach them, Master Balthazar?" asked, one evening, the old widow, in whose house he had been living on credit, for though he had shewn public proofs of his talents, he had constantly refused to give lessons in his art, yet seemed in the greatest straits for money. "Why don't you teach them? How often have I told you they would pay you well, and in ready coin? The followers of our noble duke have great gains, and generous hearts."

"*They* pay me!—Balthazar Spalatro touch

their filthy coin! By St. Barnaby, Dame Madeline!" replied the Italian in very fluent French, but with a frown, and angrily pressing his threadbare black velvet *toque* on his brows,—"by St. Barnaby! you are as short of memory as I am of money! How often have I told you that I am from Milan, and an Orleanite?"

Most frequently the good woman dared not reply to these retorts; for Spalatro, cased in his buckram pourpoint, with rusty steel buttons, huge hairy deer-skin gloves, broad leathern girdle stuck with a sheathless dagger, high starched Italian frill, and double-topped brown boots, gave the law like a feudal lord in Dame Madeline's humble dwelling. But emboldened on the present occasion by sheer necessity, that mother of hardihood as well as of invention, she ventured to raise her shrill voice as near as possible to a pitch with the key-major of her insolent lodger, and said sharply,

"What a coil is this, Master Balthazar, on the score of my good advice!—May I not speak

within my own walls? May I not give a hint? How are we to get on? Have you not consumed already the whole store I had laid in for winter? Is not the goodly half of Louis Benoit's Michaelmas hog already gone, that I meant not to touch till Christmas? Did you not use the flask of Florentine oil in three days, that would have lasted me from Martintide till Candlemas? Is not the three-galloned keg of Vernage drained to the very lees? Who picked the last leg of the old red cock for supper yesternight, and scooped the bottom of the horn of marmelade for breakfast this morning? And what have I seen of your money?—two sequins, and four Spanish florins! A goodly sum forsooth, for six weeks' bed and board, and the use of my red-tiled floor, where you rant, and stamp, and cut capers, and flourish your weapons, in a way to throw an honest woman into fits! And now I must not speak—and why? Is it because Madame of Orleans was born in Milan like you, that we are to perish for want,

while all Hesdin is in wealth and luxury? Master Balthazar, Master Balthazar!"

"Hark ye, good dame," said the Italian, twisting his moustachios, and with a supercilious air; "the tongue of a woman is hard to be parried. It gives both point and edge, pushes carte and tierce together, and is at once the passado, the staccato, and the punto!"

"I know not what means your gibberish," replied the dame, with increasing spirit in proportion to her lodger's tameness; "but this I know, that I am an honest widow, though lone withal, and care not for your punt, nor stickado or pico—not I! though while men like you have their rapiers and daggers, a poor woman like me, has no weapon but her tongue."

"Which at least she never allows to grow rusty," retorted the Italian. The landlady was about to reply, and no doubt the conversation would have gone on in a way highly edifying for us and our readers, had it not been interrupted by a loud knocking with hard knuckles

against the street-door, which shook at the unusual assault, while Balthazar placed hand on hilt, and stood in a posture of instinctive defence.

The old woman having opened the door, two men wrapped in large cloaks were seen standing close to it.

"Is this the lodging of the Italian master-of-arms?" asked one of the men, in a blunt, unceremonious tone, and an accent not of the purest; and unceremoniously poking in his face, of which only was visible a broad, mis-shapen nose, that seemed to have suffered from rude assault of mace or gauntlet, and a profusion of red and grey beard and moustachios.

"Yes, my masters, 'tis here that the renowned professor does honour by deigning to lodge. Step in, step in, good Sirs!—there stands his honourable excellency, Signor Spalatro himself; ready and willing, I'll warrant him, for a passage of arms with all comers.—A gentleman of proof, and condescending withal!"

While Dame Madeline grew thus eloquent, from the hope of relief, the man who had spoken threw a glance round the low-roofed apartment, the rafters of which were half concealed by the smoke from a turf fire, which only found a resting-place, when it required a vent, and floated like drapery on the cooking utensils that hung against the walls. The stranger shook his head, and whispered some words only audible to his companion, who stood close behind. But the Italian, rather elated by even Dame Madeline's puffery, and comprehending that the poverty of the place had given a poor idea of the talent of the professor, drew himself up into a still more imposing attitude, cast a look which was all but insulting on the strangers, and with a haughty, and almost a menacing air, he waited till they again spoke.

"And have you then, most magnanimous Signor Spalatro," resumed the former speaker, as they both entered the house, "no better a place of arms than this? Nor other weapon

than that two-handed axe, and that cut-and-thrust rapier in the corner?"

"A good workman requires few tools," replied Balthazar with disdain.

"And you have not then a short sword, a Saracen sabre, or a diamond-pointed or falcon-beaked battle-axe?" asked the other roughly.

"By St. Barnaby, my masters, it seems you think I was born in this paltry place, and that I had gathered up an armoury of hilts and blades! Let me tell you then, that when I turned my back on the Alps, I brought nothing with me but this poniard, do you see?—and as it was still red at the point, I had little care to look behind me! Perhaps the same thing happened when I set out from Toulouse, and as much at Paris; and if I travel without baggage, I might find you a reason if I chose. But the hand and the eye of Spalatro!—grace be to God, they travel with me!"

"And would you, bold Signor, favor me with a trial of your skill in arms?" Cour-

teously asked the second stranger, who wore on his face the common concealment of a black velvet mask.

"With all my heart," said Balthazar; "a civil word and a nimble wrist, are sure passports to my favour." And he looked with an air of mingled patronage and reproach on the first speaker, who retorted it with a coarse stare of defiance.

"But before I take weapon in hand," resumed Spalatro, "let me tell you, my masters, that I am Milan-born, and a follower of the house of Orleans."

At these words the unmasked stranger looked fierce, and put his right hand under his cloak; but a glance from his companion's piercing blue eyes, that shone brightly through the surrounding black velvet, arrested his arm; and the Italian continued—

"So you get no lesson, not so much as a salute from Spalatro, if you do not first pledge your honour that you are not in the service of Burgundy.

Old Madeline made a horrible grimace on hearing these words. For it was a thousand to one the new-comers were of the household, or at any rate of the train, of Duke Philip. She read as much in the boiling looks of the coarser stranger, who was a short, stout-built man, whose face bore marks of service; and she was about to interpose between the Italian and the customer he was so wantonly declining, when the man in the mask stepped with a bold air into the middle of the room, and with a strong emphasis, exclaimed—

"Be satisfied, Signor, I am neither the servitor nor vassal of Duke Philip."

"Enough said," cried the Italian. "Between men of honour a word is as good as an oath; and now, my brave Sir, what essay would you like to make? Sword, battle-axe, or poinard?"

"They say you are good at all arms, Signor," replied the stranger, with a somewhat haughty tone; "and perhaps you have ere now

measured blades with a feebler arm than mine. I have no objection to cross rapiers or clash daggers with you, for a trial of skill—but it is your fame in wielding the war-axe that has brought me to seek you now."

He here made a signal to his companion, who immediately threw open his cloak, and produced a couple of light rapiers, such as were used in the exercise of arms, but not of the form employed in serious fight. Spalatro threw a look of contempt at them, and said with a sneer—

"Truly, good gentleman, if these are your weapons, you might find worthy practice among the popinjays above at the castle, or with the pages who ride at the Quintin. I have nothing to teach of child's pastime. But if you wish for a lesson in matters of real moment, let's take to the battle-axes, and I'll shew you a trick or two."

A nod from the stranger thus addressed, produced a second unfolding of his companion's

cloak; and two highly-polished battle-axes were discovered hooked to his girdle, one falcon-beaked, the other diamond-pointed at the extremity, called the *maillet*, and the handle terminating in a three-cornered point called a tusk.

"Aha! these will do well, my master," said Spalatro, taking the weapons, weighing them in either hand, and admiring them in every part. "By St. Barnaby's beard, this likes me well! These are engines of proof! Woe wait the skull which from either of these might catch Spalatro's blow on the morion! On your guard, Signor—I'll teach you the stroke of fate!"

"Hark ye, Master Balthazar," said the stranger with an easy air of superiority, "this is the condition of our compact. If you teach me a single point of novelty that a fair-fighting man may use against his enemy—and I am on honour to confess if it be new to me—this purse shall be yours," and he pulled one from his girdle and placed it on the table. "But if

your high vaunts lead to nothing that I know not already, why then—"

"No more!" exclaimed the Italian, with an air quite as arrogant as before. "If I don't in five minutes earn the purse, I'll eat it and its contents."

"Heaven forbid! No, no, Master Balthazar, we want the contents badly enough, the Virgin knows, not to think of—" cried Dame Madeline, anxiously.

"Peace, beldame!" vociferated Spalatro,—"who gave you leave to speak of *my* wants? On your guard, Signor, on your guard!"

The man in the mask now threw his cloak aside, and shewed a tall and graceful figure modestly attired. He seized his weapon with both hands, holding the edge towards himself, the falcon-beaked *maillet* (somewhat resembling the claw of a hammer) levelled at the Italian's head, and having his wrists guarded by the *rondelle*, a round plate of steel attached to the handle of the battle-axe. He placed his left

foot in advance, and stood firm, as if to meet the shock of an enemy.

"And is that what you call a posture of guard, bold Sir?" asked Spalatro, with an ironical grin. "It may perhaps suffice in the north here,—but if you have to do with an Italian or Spaniard—"

"Why," said the stranger, briskly, "do you hold that a northern is less to fear in mortal combat?"

"Not so fast, good Signor! The double-hilted sword of a Fleming, a Dutchman's mace, or an Englishman's long-bow, are weapons unmatched in all other lands. But for the axe or dagger there are none to compare with those beyond the Alps and the Pyrenees.—So, how would you strike at your man?"

"With the *maillet* on the casque, and then give point with the handle in the visor."

"Yes, yes," said Spalatro, with a smile, "to stun his head or scratch his cheek; all that does well enough in the passing bustle of an on-

slaught, where you strike right and left, and have no time for finesse. You have seen such work as that, Signor?"

"Perhaps I have," replied the stranger, haughtily.

"And shivered many a lance no doubt in the Tournay?"

"Well, and what then?"

"Why, this—I'll wager my dagger to the smallest coin in your purse, you have never fought in the lists, foot to foot, blood for blood, life for life, or you would never talk of wielding your war-axe like a butcher. Now, mind you your lesson."

With these words, the Italian put himself in a shewy posture of attack, and raised the battle-axe above his head.

"Now, Signor," said he, "suppose you were a northern, a Dane, a Scot, or an Englishman—the Duke of Glocester, let's say; and I, as it might be, Philip of Burgundy; the fate of their coming duello depending upon such a turn

as this. Not to waste time, and expose my body to his blows, attempting, like a vulgar man-at-arms, to poke the tusk of my axe-handle into his visor, but by one adroit twist to loosen it; do ye hear?"

"By St. Andrew, ay!" answered the stranger, impatiently.

"A visor," resumed Spalatro, "and above all the new-modelled visor of the English casques, introduced by their late King Henry, and now in high vogue, is infallibly loosened if we can jerk out one of the twisted pivots on which it is hung at either side. But the edge of the axe has no purchase from which the wrist may wrench it. You must, therefore, press with the tusk, between the rosette of the rivet and the ear-plate. Do you hear?"

"Go on, go on!" exclaimed the stranger.

"Then the visor once undone, flies instantly aside from its new-fangled construction—each bar drops in the socket, the face is exposed from brow to chin, and you have only to choose

where to push the tusk or the beak of handle or *maillet*. Not being nice, *I* always select the temple or the eye."

"But," said the stranger, in a less animated tone, "it is not so easy to hit the mark between the rosette and the ear-plate. God's my speed, good fellow, if there's the space there of a bodkin's point!"

Spalatro smiled. "A little address, Signor! that's all!" said he. "Hold! your velvet mask there is tied within a hair's-breadth distance of the rosette of a visor—the knot touches the ear—very well—presto! away!"

And as he spoke, he struck aside the battle-axe from the stranger's hand—by a dexterous twist inserted the pointed handle or tusk of his own into the knot—and in a moment jerked off the velvet mask from the stranger's face. Both Spalatro and Dame Madeline instantly recognised the aquiline nose, blue eyes, and other marked but not handsome features of Philip

" the good." The old woman clasped her hands together and shook with sudden terror. Spalatro glowed with silent triumph. The duke's attendant clapped his hand on his sword, and stepped with a menacing attitude towards the Italian. But Philip interfered and exclaimed,

" 'Tis well, 'tis well! I am satisfied."

The familiar, as all close attendants of the great were then called, pushed back his rapier into its sheath, picked up the mask, and muttering something unheard by the others, prepared to collect the various weapons.

" It is well, Spalatro, you have earned your purse, and proved your skill--yet I doubt me if I could serve Duke Humphrey's helmet such a turn as you shewed my mask. But we shall have another bout ere long, and try you at other arms. Let me see you at the tilt-yard to-morrow morning at seven—you shall be fitly cared for: Joos Wooters here, my trusty armourer, will do you honour with true Flemish hospitality, and shew you some pieces of rare

device and workmanship. Good woman, look up and be happy. Take this coin for the use of your chamber and an earnest of my protection, and shew yourself in the buttery at the castle. You shall find welcome and wherewithal to add to your store. No reply, Signor Balthazar! Not a word, good dame! I have had my frolic out—but every one knows I brook no comment. When my foot is across the threshold, and my back turned, let the events of this visit be forgotten—good evening!"

"Forgotten!" said Dame Madeline, as the duke and his attendant glided away, wrapped in their cloaks as before,—"Forgotten! Holy Mary forbid that ever it should be forgotten that my poor dwelling was honoured by the footing of the good duke! Oh! Signor Spalatro, didn't I tell you great luck was coming on us? Great glory is yours, and much honour have you brought me!"

"An hour gone, it was 'Master Balthazar,'

reproach and abuse," said Spalatro, "and thus the world wags in Artois as in Italy! Ah, Dame Madeline, you little guessed how an Italian master-of-arms could manage his fence with fortune. But all is now well. Go to Master Merlet, the taverner's, with this gold mouton, redeem my crimson velvet suit and silver tissue breeches—but you needn't tell how tarnished they are!—replenish the cask of vernage, get a double flask of Gascoigny, and let me have a supper fit for the playmate of Duke Philip!"

CHAPTER V.

The following morning the master-of-arms was punctual to the duke's hour of appointment. He took his way to the castle, gaudily equipped in the crimson suit which the good dame had taken out of pledge; his bonnet to match, with plume and tassel hanging on one side his head; and his cut and thrust rapier held under his arm, when no one was near, or trailing ostentatiously on the ground, as soon as any one was in sight. He soon passed the gate of the town, traversed the suburb, crossed the

bridge over the little river Canche, and approached the precincts of the celebrated castle, where Duke Philip held at that epoch one of the most brilliant courts in Europe.

Spalatro had not an architectural or antiquarian eye, or he might have stopped to examine the antique edifice, which was built in the eleventh century, by Baldwin, Count of Artois, on the site of the ancient fort erected seven centuries previous to even that remote date, by a Roman Governor of Gaul. Our Italian passed by with equal indifference the original body of the building and the immense additions made by successive sovereigns; and scarcely noticed even the magnificent park, gardens, and pleasure-grounds that extended on all sides; his only object of inquiry being the tilt-yard. To this place he was directed with great courtesy, by the various porters and pursuivants who did duty at the several barriers, for he found that his name acted as a sufficient passport in every quarter, and his self-import-

ance did not lose any thing in consequence. The tilt-yard was a vast square enclosed with walls at a considerable distance from the castle, and in the midst of offices for the due accommodation of horses, hounds, hawks, and all the sporting appurtenances of the princely establishment. The Italian was received at the entrance by his gruff acquaintance of the preceding evening; and on inquiring for his highness, on whose invitation he had come, the Fleming pointed to a rising ground not far off, where Spalatro soon distinguished the duke, breasting a rapid hill, which he ascended at the rate of men who run for a wager. He was, in fact, at his usual task of training for his daily exercises, which he never by any chance omitted, being as it seemed determined that every advantage of physical condition should be added to the moral courage which urged him to the combat with Humphrey of Glocester.

This preliminary being finished, Philip mounted a horse, which was held ready saddled

by a groom, and after taking several gallops in a ring specially devoted to such exercise, he rode towards the tilt-yard. He was now accompanied by a group of princes and nobles, with their and his own personal attendants, for almost all his guests followed his example, and either from courtesy or for pleasure took part in his pursuits. The Duke of Britanny, his brother, Arthur of Richemont, Philip Count of St. Pol, brother to John of Brabant, Anthony, bastard of Burgundy, James de Lalain, Peton de Saintrailles, and numerous others of note, were of the party. But the Duke of Bedford, the chief of Philip's guests, was never present at these morning exercises, which were avowedly undertaken from hostility and hatred to his brother.

As Philip entered the tilt-yard, his keen eye soon caught the figure of the Italian master-of-arms, and he accosted him with that frank and ready condescension, which had contributed so much to gain him the surname that should be

bestowed only for deeds, not manners. Spalatro felt doubly proud in this distinction, and in the cunning management by which he had first acquired the notice of the duke; for all his reserve as to giving lessons in the town of Hesdin, and his apparent candour in avowing himself a partizan of the house of Orleans, were merely assumed for the purpose of exciting Philip's curiosity, which he knew well was more than ever alive to every subject and person connected with the feats of arms. He had speculated well; for his reputation for skill, and his refusal to teach, were soon bruited in town and castle, and Philip, as the Italian calculated, was unable to resist the desire to judge for himself. Several of the household had been for some days previous sounding Spalatro, and when the sovereign visitor himself at length came, the Italian knew him from the first moment, and timed his conversation accordingly. Philip now accosted him with all the eagerness inspired by his last night's proof of address; and he soon put it

farther to the test by various trials with sword and lance, which amply bore out the Italian's previous specimens of knowledge in his art.

While all this was going on, the various nobles and knights taking part in the exercises, riding at the quintin, practising with arbalettes, pitching quoits, or slinging the bar, a considerable uproar was heard approaching from the town; and several official personages, from the gate-keeper up to the chamberlain, came in due succession of grades to inform the duke of the cause of the disturbance. It appeared that an inhabitant of the suburbs having just then killed another man, as he and his friends asserted, in fair fight, he came with a posse of the town's-people, according to the privilege of their charter, to claim from the duke in person the right of freedom for the successful combatant. As this was an event of rare occurrence, almost the whole population of Hesdin had poured forth, glad of an opportunity to lay claim to even the smallest portion of corporate rights, of which

cities have naturally been at all times so tenacious. The duke and his friends, with their followers, were on their parts equally anxious to see this exhibition; and Philip, mounting his horse, took post in the centre of the tilt-yard, surrounded by the officers of his household, in a state of most unceremonious disorder. The word being given for the entrance of the crowd, a rush of men, women, and children took place, bearing the newly-claimed freeman before them, high lifted on the shoulders of the foremost, besmeared with blood, and looking aghast and awe-stricken, from the memory of his recent exploit and amazement at his present honours.

"Long live Nicholas Mavot, free burgher of Hesdin!" shouted the crowd, and it was some time before their boisterous triumph subsided sufficiently to allow their official spokesman, the provost of the town, to take his place in front, and address his formal demand to the duke for the blood-stained ragamuffin's admission to the rights and privileges of citizenship. Philip,

assuming all possible gravity, and preventing, by his example, any outburst of laughter or signs of mockery on the part of his numerous suite, asked if the fact on which these claims were made was not substantiated by proof?

"May it please your highness," answered the provost, "you will remember, that by article or item seventy-seven of the charter of our honourable Bourg of Hesdin, or *Hesdinum*, granted by the puissant Count Robert of Artois in 1288, and confirmed by his noble, potent, and princely brother and successor Othon, in 1330, of which article or item your highness, our liege lord and sovereign, has of course due cognizance—"

"In the hurry of the moment, I cannot say that I quite, perfectly, absolutely recollect the particular clause," said Philip.

"Then I will cite it for your highness's satisfaction," replied the provost, proceeding to unfold a huge heap of black-letter parchments; "or if it seems well to your benignity, I can

read the whole charter from beginning to end."

"No, no, no!" exclaimed the duke, hastily. "Pray, most worthy provost, spare yourself that trouble. Far be it from me, for my own gratification, to impose such a task on so honourable a functionary, or to inflict on our much beloved and highly-cherished people of Hesdin, a causeless delay in the accordance of their rights! Cite the clause, if it so please you, but don't read it—I take it on your word."

"Long live the good Duke Philip for ever!" rung in a hundred reverberations round the walls of the tilt-yard; while the provost, low-bowing, but somewhat disappointed withal at losing the opportunity of reciting a couple of hundred sheets of execrable Latin, seized the first moment of silence to resume.

"Thus, then, your highness, runs the aforesaid article—'If any inhabitant or sojourner in the suburbs of the said free bourg of Hesdin, or *Hesdinum*, kill or have killed another out-

right, in single combat for fair cause, his own body defending, he may come direct, with such burghers or followers as choose, and demand his rights of franchise of the sovereign count in person—the only proof required being the blood of his slain enemy, undried, on his right hand, the veidence of the lifeless body, and his declaration that he did the deed, with his readiness to maintain it, shield on arm, and cudgel in hand, against the offered gage and challenge of all men.' "

" And hast thou, Nicholas Mavot, done thine enemy to death, in single combat, for fair cause?" asked the duke, turning to the blood-stained candidate.

" Ay, so it please your highness's majesty!" said the fellow, holding up his reeking right hand and a bloody knife, while several others dragged forward the corpse.

" And does no one challenge the franchise so demanded," said Philip aloud, turning away from these disgusting evidences.

"Yes, yes, your highness!" exclaimed a half-breathless man, plunging through the throng, and approaching the duke—"God grant I am not too late! I challenge the murderer's claim—I dare him to single fight, shield on arm, and cudgel in hand—and I will prove the miscreant's crime, on his false body, in open lists of battle, when and where your highness and the good burgesses may command."

"And who art thou, good fellow?" asked Philip, touched by the man's emotion.

"I am Jacotin Plouvier, your highness, freeman of Hesdin, and brother to the youth this wretch has murdered."

"He avers that he killed your brother in fair fight," said the duke.

"In fair fight!" exclaimed the other; "and who will believe him? Look on him as he stands—dwindled, shrivelled, and mis-shapen—mark his gnarled limbs, and say if he could overcome a man, much less such a man as Pierre Plouvier! Ah! there is my brother's body!" con-

tinued he, half frantic as he recognised the corpse, which he seized in his arms, and held forward to view. "Look now on this that was erewhile a man! See the fine proportions of this form, the sinewy arms, the powerful breadth of chest and shoulders, and say if such a thing as *that* could cope with him! Oh, God! oh, God! and is this thy fate, my dear, dear brother! Look here, look here, where the villain's knife entered the back! See the gash—and the blood that gushes from it still! Is that fair fighting? Duke Philip! Duke Philip! I beg, I demand justice at your hands! Fellow burghers, will you let your franchises be polluted by the admission of this murderer? Oh, my brother, my brother, my brave, my beloved brother—you, strong, on the point of marriage, with hope and health for thy lot in life, is this thy fate?"

With these words he hugged the corpse in his arms, and wept like a child. Then dashing the body furiously down, he called out again—

"But what's the use of this? Is this the way

to revenge his death? Let the body be flung into its bloody grave—but give me my revenge! Duke Philip, I call on you for justice and vengeance!"

"Ill-mannered man," cried the provost, pushing him aside, "is it thus you clamour to your sovereign? Is this the dutiful respect you owe to his highness? What will these nobles think of the people of Hesdin after such a specimen? Stand back! Stand back, fellow!"

"No, no, this must not be," exclaimed Philip, pressing forward his horse. "By St. Michael, the man speaks well and fairly! And it shall never be said that Philip of Burgundy refused justice in a case like this—he who for years cried out, and still cries out for vengeance against his father's murderers! Let the gage of battle be granted—there is just cause! What say you, Nicholas Mavot, to this man's charge?"

"He trembles and cannot speak," said Plouvier. "Is not that guilt, your highness?"

"It may be innocence, good fellow," said

Philip. "This presence and your accusation might agitate any man. Speak, Mavot! How came this wound in your adversary's back?"

"I cannot say how, your highness," replied the accused, in a faltering voice, "but there are wounds on the face and breast as well."

As he said this, some of his friends held up the dead man's visage, which was scarred in several places, and faint marks of the knife were also on his breast.

"I can speak to those scars, if so it please your highness," said an old woman who stood by.

"Speak, then, without fear or favour," said the duke, in an encouraging tone, and with a look of recognition.

"Well, then, under your highness' protection and God's mercy," said Spalatro's landlady, Dame Madeline, coming out from the crowd, "I saw from the river's side, where I was stooping low to gather cresses, Nicholas Mavot start from the copse close to St. Helen's well, and

stab young Pierre Plouvier behind; and while the poor youth lay bleeding and gasping on the ground, turn round the body, and gash it on the face and breast with his knife."

At these words a burst of execration ran through the crowd, and respect for the duke and his company, alone kept the people from tearing the culprit in pieces.

"'Tis false, 'tis false!" cried Mavot, with a glance of despair. "She is his mother's sister, and would swear away my life. I killed him fairly, and will stand by my act."

"Justice be done!" said the duke. "Let the lists be prepared for noon to-morrow, in the market-place, the gibbet for the vanquished erected hard by, the weapons and other usual matters prepared, the accused and the accuser shaven and shriven; and, by God's grace, we will ourselves witness the combat, in which, may Heaven favour the right, and punish the wrong!"

Shouts of approval and delight ran through

the crowd. The check given to the exercise of a corporate privilege, was amply repaid by the near prospect of a scene of legal barbarism. The official attendants took the two champions into their keeping, to prepare them, in due course of custom, for the morrow's ordeal ; and as soon as the throng dispersed, the duke led the way to the castle, to meet his more elevated visitors at breakfast, having first given orders to Joos Wooters to conduct Spalatro to the armoury, to exhibit the new forge, built on the duke's own plan, and under his inspection, and consult on the formation of a newly-constructed head-piece and hanberk, which had for some days past occupied Philip and his workmen, almost to the exclusion of all other matters.

CHAPTER VI.

Philip's attention was soon diverted from the scene just described, by the variety of objects, both of politics and pleasure, which at this time required and divided his cares. At the morning repast, which waited his return to the castle, were assembled the princely guests before enumerated, together with the Duchesses of Burgundy, Bedford, Guienne, and the celebrated Countess of Salisbury, whose beauty had totally captivated the good duke, by whom she was raised to the level of even his wife and

royal visitors. She shared in the honours of his court more like its mistress than his guest; and her influence was not only tolerated, but sought for and turned to account, by every one of those whose interests were more or less at stake, in every public measure adopted or abandoned by Philip.

The most anxious of all the high personages at that time assembled was the Duke of Bedford, who saw that, notwithstanding the treaty of Amiens, sworn between him and the Dukes of Burgundy and Britanny, two years before, Philip was evidently wavering in his constancy, instigated on the one hand by the unceasing intrigues of Arthur de Richemont, who was married to his sister, the Duchess of Guienne, and on the other by his personal enmity against the Duke of Glocester. Bedford consequently devoted all his efforts to secure Philip to his cause, by the influence of his wife, also Philip's sister, and of the Countess of Salisbury, his almost openly avowed mistress. Little cordiality

therefore existed among the leading inmates of the castle of Hesdin; and all the less distinguished persons followed of course these high examples, to turn the ducal court into a scene of public dissimulation and secret intrigue.

"Lovely countess, my fair sisters, my wife, and noble princes all, I crave pardon for what may seem my uncourteous delay," said Philip, on entering the private eating-room, with that air of elegance for which he was distinguished, and which we may fairly suppose was, even in those remote times, formed on the same system of exterior observances which constitute good breeding at present; for, although fashion may have effected many modifications, still the essentials of manners among a polished people must be at all times nearly the same.

"I know not how it betides," continued the duke; "but day after day some unforeseen occurrence keeps us later and later from our meals, and makes us wholly heedless of the old distich, the golden rule of life, which tells us,

'Rise at five,
Dine at nine,
Sup at five,
To bed at nine,
And you shall live to ninety-nine!'

But we shall by and by reform, and return to the wholesome hours of our forefathers."

"Good my brother," said the Duchess of Bedford, "small chance there seems of that, while you give yourself up to those exercises which consume your mornings in a way more fitting to some young page, or unspurred 'squire, than to a sovereign prince and mellowed warrior."

"Verily, sister Anne," cried the proud Duchess of Guienne, while her husband, De Richemont, gave an approving look, "you rarely miss an occasion to twit our noble brother with these necessary trainings, which every knight has need for ere he combat his mortal foe. 'Twould almost seem, were it not unnatural quite, that you regretted the chances which he thus acquires for victory."

"Scarce more unnatural than that my sister should give utterance to such a surmise against my affection and my duty."

"Affection and duty, when divided, my good Anne, weigh light in either balance, and 'tis doubtful which may kick the beam."

"Why, how is this, fair sister?" said Bedford, with his usual temperate and placid interposition in these bickerings. "Has an hour's unusual fasting made you sarcastical this morning?"

"No, Bedford!" exclaimed De Richemont; "but it seems to have made our sister Anne more splenetic than meet, when she takes to task in this way our brother Burgundy."

"Sure I am at least," replied Bedford, calmly, "that our noble brother needs not thy championship, De Richemont, to save him from his sister's kind solicitude."

"Solicitude!" said De Richemont, angrily, "methinks the word is misplaced, or at least the object it applies to. Thy duchess, Bedford,

is too much English in her heart not to let Glocester largely share in her—solicitude."

"The Count de Richemont is a too ready interpreter of others' thoughts, and a far too indelicate utterer of names that, at least, might be left unspoken," retorted the Duchess of Bedford, with rising warmth.

"False delicacy is twin brother to foul play," said De Richemont. "I practise neither, I am prompt in speech, and open in deeds;—if I think of Glocester, I mention him, and if I mention him it is in no guise of friendship."

"We need not that news, good brother," said Bedford, losing temper at this persevering rudeness. "We know that no Englishman is honoured with Arthur de Richemont's amity."

"Perhaps 'tis because I have tried them well," muttered de Richemont.

"Perhaps because you treated them ill," replied Bedford, in as low a tone.

Philip, who had listened to this conversation, saw lips quiver and cheeks grow pale, and he

thought it full time to interpose, as he did not wish for an open breach between his brothers-in-law, though not sorry for these occasional skirmishes, which shewed him his own importance in the eyes of those who were so ready to quarrel on his account.

"Good brothers, and kind sisters," said he, "this is a bad way to blunt the edge of appetite. It is not beseeming this family party which we all form together. By the holy patron of my name and house, it grieves me to see ill blood between those so dear to me! And the reproach falls back on me—for I must be a sorry host to manage so ill my guests, as to give them time for disagreement. To table, ho! Squires, to your duty—let the trenchermen attend!"

While the various squires, of the wine-cellar and the pantry, with the squires *tranchants* (or the carvers), and various others who had waited for this signal, busied themselves with all the occupations of the substantial repast that

was now served, Philip took every means to restore tranquillity among his relatives, and then turned his most gallant attentions to the beautiful Englishwoman, who almost presided mistress of the feast, but still did not actually assume that place in a way so decisive as to shock the feelings of the Duchess of Burgundy by her side, or the temporising scruples of the other princesses. Conversation after a time became animated and general. The late ill-temper was either forgotten or hushed up, as the dissimulation of courtiers acting on the egotism of men told the rival brothers-in-law that mutual policy required them to wear a fair face. Philip recounted the scene of the tilt-yard to Bedford and the ladies; and the curiosity of all was deeply engaged for the result of the combat to take place on the morrow. Other subjects of immediate interest for the present day—the miracle play to be acted by the company of Paris mummers before dinner, at noon the hawking party in the plains close

by the palace for the evening, and the ball at night, to be followed up by the most favourite pastime of all the *dance machabie*, or dance of death—were topics that gave ample occupation between the courses of the repast. It ended in due time; and the various persons broke off in groups, or singly slipped away, to the many pursuits of listless gallantry, or still more idle occupations which filled the hours of the uninformed, if not unintellectual, race of beings, who knew not the glorious impulses of improvement, given by the invention of printing and the revival of literature to the generation immediately succeeding.

When the ladies were escorted with due honour and chivalric care, as their various fancies led the way, Philip proposed an adjournment to his closet to his brothers of Bedford and De Richemont, with the Duke of Britanny and the Count of St. Pol, brother to John Duke of Brabant, regent of Hainault, and Jacqueline's most unflinching enemy. The

four princes followed as Philip led the way through the files of pages, chamberlains and halberdiers who lined the galleries and corridors; and this council of sovereignty was soon in close debate, with closed doors, having given strict orders that their privacy might be undisturbed, except on the arrival of some pressing despatches.

We will not clog the march of our story, by detailing all the subjects debated in this domestic congress, in which its various members endeavoured to subvert and thwart the designs of each other, or render them subservient to their own particular interests. The Duke of Britanny, a prince of mean talents and wholly influenced by his brother De Richemont, left to the latter the task of counteracting Bedford's efforts to keep Philip steady in his alliance with England, and in his enmity against Charles the Seventh, and only gave him the negative support of his general silence, or occasional assents to the appeals which De Richemont made to

his authority for his arguments or insinuations.

The Duke of Bedford, on the other hand, laboured in every possible way to strengthen his influence over Burgundy, by assurances that England should stand neuter in her quarrel with Jacqueline, let Humphrey of Glocester wish or think as he might. St. Pol, who personally hated the latter, from recollections of the war of Hainault the preceding year, as well as in right of his championship for the cause of his brother, John of Brabant, whose honour was supposed to be violated by Glocester in the tenderest point, threw all the weight of his support into the same scale with the brothers of Britanny, so that Bedford found himself alone opposed to the other three. But still relying on Philip's esteem for him, his hatred against his father's murderers, and his personal interest so much at stake in this Dutch question, he hoped to keep his ground in the unequal contest.

Philip, always actuated by his thirst for

aggrandisement, and his want of money for his exorbitant expenditure, took this occasion to press on Bedford several demands which he knew the regent would not dare to refuse.

"Willingly, my brother," said Bedford, with diplomatic cleverness, putting the best face on Philip's avaricious claims, "it is but fair that I agree to what is so justly your due, in right of your predecessors. I cede to you, in the name of my nephew, King Henry, and these noble princes are my witnesses, the counties of Auxerre and Macon, with the lordship and castleward of Bar-sur-Seine, in full sovereignty, and in quittance for those unsettled accounts. And for my individual self, I freely waive my right to present payment of the balance of one hundred and twenty thousand gold crowns still due on the dowry of my beloved duchess, consenting to receive it in two years from this day, or to take in lieu an annual payment of four thousand livres, redeemable by quarters, at the choice of yourself or your heirs."

" Bedford, my good brother," said Philip, pressing the regent's hand, " this generous compliance with claims you might have withstood, and requests you might have refused, merits my gratitude, and adds to my esteem. And you engage to restrain your impetuous brother Glocester, who so little resembles you in prudence and discretion, from sending aid to that false woman whom I will not call my cousin."

" My brother Humphrey is dear to me, though I lament his rashness in this unhappy cause," replied Bedford, " and I vow to you to leave no means untried to make him abandon it, or at least to neutralize his opposition to your proceedings against Countess Jacqueline. He shall have neither men nor money, if my influence may keep them back. Would that I might succeed as well in stopping this fatal quarrel between ye, and dissuade ye both from your projected combat."

" Name it not, Bedford ! I swear by St. Andrew, that if the solemn council now assembled

at Paris does not prohibit the fight, my body or Glocester's shall remain dead within the lists."

"Right, cousin!" exclaimed St. Pol. "Be it never said that you were persuaded to shrink from the duel you provoked—the blood of your race would run back sullied to its source!"

"Brother of Burgundy," said De Richemont, "in your place, I would forbid, on pain of a personal quarrel, any Englishman to speak on this question in my presence. It is a settled point, and it must be a false friend who would recommend a withdrawal on *your* part, which would brand your good name with infamy."

"So think I!" cried the Duke of Britanny, with a solemn shake of the head.

"Hear me, princes!" said Bedford; "but it is to you, De Richemont, that I particularly speak. No man will venture, I hope, to throw a doubt on my word—it is beyond attaint; and Philip of Burgundy, when he named me as umpire in the unfortunate quarrel, even to the

combat which is to decide it, between him and my own brother, became warrant for my impartial honour. As to you, Arthur de Richemont, I know you to be choleric ; and he who has done doubtfully by the English nation may well be excused some petulance against its individual sons. I therefore let pass your unmeasured phrase."

"To gain more freedom to attack my honour?" cried De Richemont, in high ire,— "Is it so, Bedford? For if it be, Glocester and Burgundy shall not be alone in the lists! Do you mean to impute me wrong in the affair of my parole? Do you revive the question of my freedom from its obligation, as soon as your brother, King Henry, died?"

"I revive no question, for it never ceased to exist," said Bedford, coolly; "nor will I now discuss a point on which we might never agree: the case is a plain one. You were a prisoner honourably taken in the fight of Agincourt. You obtained leave on parole after six years

captivity, to come into Britanny for the especial purpose of freeing the duke, your brother, from the prison to which he was treacherously confined, by connivance of false Charles, the self-styled king of my late brother's and my present nephew's realm of France. When you arrived, your brother had gained his liberty by other means—our Royal Henry sank into an untimely tomb. And you, the prisoner of the English nation, held yourself freed from your parole by the death of the English king. England could not send an army to hunt you down. You took your freedom, and you keep it. Such is my statement, and no more. I make no comment, and you will scarce offer a denial."

"Denial!" repeated De Richemont. "No: you might have spared yourself and me, and our brothers and cousin here, this long repetition of facts notorious, and which I am ready to maintain with my body against the lowest or the highest man in England—ay, or in France, good brother, all regent as you are!"

"Hold there, De Richemont; your cause will gain no strength from empty words. You know I dare not risk my country's and my nephew's rights, to measure myself in private quarrel with any He that breathes."

"You ought not then insult one, to whom you may not offer knightly atonement."

"The young withers shrink, De Richemont, even before they are touched. You are sensitive because you are sore. But let us cease these squabbles, which can end in no good result. Matter enough of moment presses on us. For you the question is, will you or will you not take manly quarrel with Britanny, your brother by blood, and with Burgundy and me, your brothers by marriage? Will you make another to the triple act which binds us in solemn ties of honour in one common cause? Or will you, instead, accept that mock staff of Constable of France, which usurping Charles dishonours you by offering."

"No man shall dare dishonour me—not even

a king's son, English or French—either by act or implication," said De Richemont. "And to prove my straight-forward readiness to meet your questions, and to demean me as I ought at this crisis, hear my answer. If Burgundy and you, and my brother of Britanny here, with St. Pol to witness for the contract, agree and promise me the command of a sufficient army to take the field against Charles, I reject his offers of the staff of constable, which no hand has grasped since Earl Buchan loosed his hold of it in death on the bloody field of Verneuil. I bind myself to your common cause; and I pledge myself to finish the war or die in the attempt. Answer me, now, all, freely, and without guile."

"I give my full consent," said the Duke of Britanny.

"Speak, Bedford!" said Duke Philip, with his usual caution; "you are the representative of a king, and have most at issue."

"Then, with all the candour required of me, I answer," said Bedford, deliberately. "In

the first place, I offer to Arthur de Richemont, the county of Jersey, in full sovereignty, and a yearly pension charged on the joint revenues of France and England, to what amount may be fixed by arbiters chosen equally by himself and me, in proof of my desire to attach him firmly to our cause. But I cannot in conscience confide the leading of an army of thousands of men, to one who has never fought in battle-field since his early essay in arms on the plains of Agincourt, and who shewed not even there the skill required for such a charge."

"Furies of hell! must I bear this?" cried de Richemont, starting violently up; "'tis said, 'tis done, the insult is graven in my heart! By Heaven and earth I swear this never shall be forgiven. England, I pledge you from this hour, eternal, desperate hatred, revenge and ruin! Philip, farewell! St. Pol, bear with me! Brother, follow me! Bedford, the day will come when you and your detested nation shall rue this outrage!"

With these words de Richemont attempted to leave the room, followed by his brother; but Philip interposed, and was endeavouring to calm his fury, when a chamberlain, who had previously knocked at the private door of the closet, and was commanded by Philip to enter, came in, and handed a sealed packet to the duke, saying, that the knight who was its bearer, had come post haste, without an hour of rest, from Zealand, by Flanders, and craved immediate admission.

"And who is the knight?" asked Philip, seizing the packet impatiently.

"Sir Francon de Borsele," replied the chamberlain.

"Ha!" exclaimed the duke, "give him instant admission! Brothers, friends, I implore ye stop awhile; let every personal thought be sacrificed to me one moment, then follow what impulses ye may."

The four princes resumed or kept their seats with as much apparent calm as they could com-

mand so soon after the rude explosion that had agitated all of them more or less. Philip began to tear open the seal, the envelope, and the silk bands that bound the packet, and at the same instant, Vrank Van Borselen entered the room.

"Welcome, Sir Francon," said Philip impatiently, as the young knight made his obeisance. "This packet is fastened with a minuteness that does honour to Zealand etiquette. It is from your noble father, no doubt, and you may perhaps save time by unceremoniously telling the contents. Speak, good Sir Francon —you are in confidential presence, and need have no reserve."

Vrank was certainly well enabled to obey this order, for it was himself that had written, folded, and sealed his father's despatch, with the forms used among the great in the most civilized parts of Europe, but which were totally unpractised in the rude regions, whence he had arrived, except by the sovereigns or those immediately attached to the court. He

was tolerably prepared with the succinct account he had to render to the duke of the transaction at Tergoes, having well digested his father's recital, which he listened to attentively during the half-hour occupied in the tying up and sealing of the despatch. He knew well the personal appearance of the princes before whom he was to speak, and had learned from the chamberlain that they were closeted with the duke; so his air was quite unembarrassed, and he began his speech with a steadiness worthy an ambassador. But ere he advanced further than some courteous form of words by which he introduced his father's respectful message, Philip had succeeded in coming at the inmost fold of paper which contained the written document, and casting his eye on it for a moment, he burst out laughing and exclaimed—

"By St. Andrew, this is a model for diplomatists! Hear ye, my friends, the despatch of my noble vassal Meere Borselen of Evers-

dyke—'For saving of time and fear of risks, I commend your highness to my son Vrank, the bearer, who knows all I could communicate.' Before our lady, Sir Francon, your countrymen merit well their reputation for caution! But why give so much time to outward preparation if speed was so important?"

"To let none through whose hands the packet might chance to pass suppose we were in haste, which most often betokens indecision."

"And had you chanced to fall ill, to die even on the road, Sir Francon, of what use was your despatch?"

"Better your highness should have remained some days in ignorance of my news, than let it be known prematurely to your enemies."

"Heaven always grant me such prudent allies as your father, and such faithful servitors as you!" exclaimed Philip, "and now for your tidings, Sir Francon, which this preface does not announce for good!"

"They are not so, in truth, your highness,

but you will pardon the messenger who would wish them better. In brief then, Countess Jacqueline, her brother William, Rudolf Van Diepenholt, Ludwick Van Monfoort, and the whole force of their faction, are in close junction, and have the upper hand—"

"They shall soon be undermost, Sir Francon!" cried Philip.

"Hear me out, your highness—and a large fleet with some thousands of English troops—"

"Ha! what would you say?" exclaimed Philip; while Bedford, De Richemont, and St. Pol started suddenly up, the Duke of Britanny more slowly following their movement.

"—Were in our seas the moment I left South Beveland," continued Vrank, respectfully and firmly.

"Well, well!" cried Philip.

"—And ere I reached the coast of Flanders—"

"What then? Speak quick, Sir Francon! What then?"

" —They must have landed in some of the islands of Zealand."

At this conclusion of Vrank's broken sentence, Philip lost all his wonted command of temper and discretion. He stamped on the floor, and uttered imprecation after imprecation, with astonishing volubility. De Richemont and St. Pol could not conceal their delight, and chimed in, with every inflaming epithet to add to Philip's rage; while Bedford, overwhelmed with surprise and sorrow, stood silent and almost stupified.

" Let princely faith be no longer the by-word for treachery—but English perfidy stand in its stead!" cried Philip.

" Let the house of Lancaster bow down its head in shame!" said St. Pol, in even a higher tone.

" May no Briton ever again meet confidence or trust!" exclaimed De Richemont, more loudly and fiercely than the others.

Bedford, the while, spoke not a word, and

his unruffled air, proving him superior to all personal feelings under such injurious circumstances, did more towards calming Philip than even the violence of De Richemont and St. Pol, which had, however, made him already ashamed by shewing him the deformity of his own intemperate bearing. Bedford's countenance of candid regret told him also how blameless he was in this affair. Philip, therefore, with one of those prompt exertions of self-command, which few men possess, became instantly as calm as though nothing had occurred to discompose him ; and while De Richemont and St. Pol gazed on him, as astonishment mingled with the respect which was due more to his power over himself than others, he offered his hand to Bedford, and exclaimed,

" Bedford, I heartily ask your pardon ! As my brother, as my guest, as the noblest instance that lives, of honour, wisdom and valour, the atonement is triply due to you. I am ashamed

to have forgotten my sense of decorum, and to have sunk in your esteem. Forgive me!"

Bedford pressed the proffered hand in his, and assured Philip that he blamed not the natural expression of passion so justly excited, but that he would prove his regret and displeasure at its cause, by instantly setting out for England, and interposing his whole authority between his brother and the madness of his proceedings. The witnesses of this prompt reconciliation were differently moved by it; Vrank Van Borselen felt the most generous emotion rising up, at the double display of magnanimity; the others looked on in sullen disappointment and displeasure.

"Ere noon, my friends, I shall communicate to ye all my views of this unlooked-for matter; but of this be assured, it shall change in nought my already concerted plans, nor shall it interrupt in one tittle the sports traced out for the six days which are to come. Let me impose implicitly on all, silence on these events, and

beg as a boon, apparent forgetfulness, at least of all that has passed at this conference. At the end of this week's term, my plans will be arranged, and each will then be free to follow all his own. In the mean time, this frantic expedition from England gives me little concern. My faithful friends in Zealand and Holland will soon check the invasion, and my troops from Flanders under John Uterkin—"

"Are already opposed to the enemy," said Vrank, who knew well how to interpose a well-timed interruption even to his sovereign.

"Good!" cried Philip, his blue eyes sparkling with joy at the ready intelligence, "and we shall soon ourselves confront the danger!—And now let us result to your Friesland mission, Sir Francon."

"All promises well, may it please your highness. Radbolt of Ils, and Haron of Bolswart, the leading chiefs, have sworn fidelity and prompt succour to your cause—"

"Enough then! Let Glocester stand on

his guard !—you may retire, Sir Francon—we will give you private audience to-morrow, and hear minute details."

No sooner had Vrank obeyed this intimation, than Philip once more enjoined secrecy, and forbade all outward evidence of dissension between his brothers-in-law ; and the princes soon separated to follow up the various amusements traced out for the day, with the smoothest looks, and the least agitated thoughts they could command.

Vrank took immediate measures for repose and refreshment after his rapid journey, and did not make his public appearance until the night had fairly set in. Then, more from duty than from actual inclination—for recollection of the Zeven-volden had produced a magic change in the temperament which formerly urged him into the vortex of pleasure—he joined the dancers in the ball-room. A certain feeling of vanity also prompted him to shew how little he valued the fatigues of three days and nights'

travel. And he never excited more admiration than he did on this occasion, by the union of grace, elegance, and gallantry, with an air of solid sense that was pre-eminently his own.

CHAPTER VII.

The combat for life and death between Jacotin Plouvier and Nicholas Mavot was the subject of universal curiosity, and a species of wild interest, to almost every individual in the town and castle of Hesdin. It was fixed for the hour of noon on the day following the scenes we have just described. Long before that hour the lists had been prepared in the market place of the town, fronting the site where the Hotel de Ville was subsequently erected, by Sebastian Oya, architect to the

Emperor Charles V. The place where that edifice now stands was on this occasion occupied by a covered wooden pavilion hastily erected for the accommodation of Duke Philip and the princes his guests, with some others adjoining, for the courtiers and officers of the household. These "stands," as we familiarly call such erections, were hung with cloth of various colours, filled up with as much care as could be given on such short preparation. But neither the time nor the occasion allowed or warranted any approach to such magnificence of decoration as was displayed in honour of the jousts and tournaments, on which the scene about to be enacted was a farce, and to modern notions a disgusting parody. But the immense crowds, collected from the towns and villages for leagues around, who had heard of the affair during the night, now filled the wide area of the market-place with a lively exhibition of human anxiety, in a matter that involved excitements a thousand times greater than the most elegant

display of chivalry. And there was something desperately awful in the absence of every thing imposing, and the presence of all that was impressive, in the preparations for the deadly conflict. The coarsely constructed arena was thick-strewn with sand; the palings that surrounded it were rough and rude; two chairs covered with black cloth were placed at either end; the huts outside the lists which contained the almost savage men were of the commonest materials, little better than sties for swine; while opposite the duke's pavilion was a high gibbet, from which a rope dangled down; and a dark-visaged hangman stood beneath, holding the noose in his impatient hand.

Just as the clock of St. Mary's church struck out the deep-sounding notice of noon, the trumpets of Duke Philip announced his entrance into the tower; and in a few minutes he and his suite of friends and followers took the various places assigned for them. No parade of majesty beyond the official troop of atten-

dants accompanied Philip on this occasion. He came in the mere character of a spectator, and the solemnity of his black suit and the stern calmness of his look, in which he seemed the model for all those around him, harmonised well with the awful feelings of the crowd. No ladies appeared in the pavilion. Their absence was occasioned, not by the ferocity, but by the vulgarity of the expected exhibition. Had it been gentlemen that were to fight, and noble blood that was to flow, the tender dames of the fifteenth century had not shrunk from, but would have anxiously thronged to the scene. But the total want of every thing softening or graceful left the spectators to the uncurbed exposure of man's natural fierceness.

The provost of the town, Mercio du Gardin, and Messire Gilles de Harchies, a gentleman appointed for the day to the same office on the part of the duke, acted as judges, and took their station in a balcony close to the lists. At a signal from Philip that he was ready, a bell

was rung, for the combatants were not honoured with a flourish of trumpets, and the doors of the huts were simultaneously opened and the men led to their respective chairs. Mavot looked wild and haggard, his adversary determined and fierce—but the countenances of both were stamped with the air of desperation, natural to men on the point of a struggle which must end in the death of one or the other.

The whole appearance of these men had something frightfully ludicrous, and the crowd on seeing them could not resist a murmur of laughter, which rose above the exclamation of horror that mingled with it. For a tight dress of leather enveloped each, shewing the form of limbs and body with the accuracy of complete nudity; their feet were naked, their nails cut close, and their heads shaved. They stared on each other with an expression of mutual surprise and disgust; and recollecting that each was a resemblance of the other they simultaneously started back, as if they would

shrink from the reflection of their own disfigurement. They sat down on the chairs and waited the progress of the ceremony, while the provosts raised their truncheons and called out to the indecorous crowd with a loud voice,

"Guare le Ban!" a technical warning of magical effect, for it produced an instant silence among the people, who dreaded the punishment that was sure to follow an infraction of the order it implied.

Some of the corporate officers now entered, with attendants bearing various matters. Two of them placed in the hand of each champion a bannerol of devotion emblematic of their respective saints; and a functionary, holding a large illuminated mass-book with silver clasps, proposed the customary oaths, with true official indifference to the perjury which one or the other of necessity committed. Mavot swore that he killed his enemy fairly; and Plouvier swore that he did the deed foully. The impatience of the spectators was quickly relieved

by the more decisive tokens of the approaching combat. To each of the men was now handed a triangular wooden shield painted red, the apex of which they were obliged to hold upwards, instead of bearing it in the more natural and efficient manner common to knights and soldiers. Then the bannerols were replaced by two maple sticks of equal length and weight, and each a most deadly weapon in the grasp of a desperate man. The chairs were removed outside the lists; and the final ceremony of preparation took place.

This was of a nature to call forth the exercise of all the provost's authority to repress the laughter of the crowd, and to put to a severe test the decorum of the better-mannered spectators. Close beside each champion was placed a copper vessel filled with grease; and a groom seizing each with one arm immediately fell to work to smear him over in every part with the slippery unction, so as to make it quite impossible that either could catch hold of his adver-

sary with any chance of retaining him for an instant.

Next was brought forward two basins of ashes, in which each man carefully plunged his hands and rubbed them well, removing the grease and allowing a steady grasp of shields and cudgels. And then was put into the mouths of both, coarse sugar, to refresh them in the course of the combat, keep them in wind, and afford a supply of saliva—for such were the supposed qualities of the remedy.

The attendants now retired; and one of the provosts standing up in his balcony, flung down a glove into the arena and cried loudly—

"Let each man do his duty!"

A rush forward towards the paling, which bent inwards with the pressure of the throng, straining, jumping, pushing and squeezing, and causing, consequently, a general disappointment to individual efforts, proved the anxiety of the people to witness the first assault. It instantly took place; Plouvier, who was strong

and athletic, rushed forward with the vigour of a wild beast bounding on its prey. It seemed as if the next moment must have decided the fate of the short and crooked, but still active being to whom he was opposed; and had Mavot waited the attack, such had no doubt been the result. But as Plouvier came close to him and raised his arm to strike, he shifted his cudgel into his left hand, held up his shield, and, stooping down, seized a fist-full of sand, which he dexterously flung full into his enemy's face. Shouts of applause and laughter burst from the people at this unheroic stratagem, and were loudly renewed as Plouvier strove to rub the sand from his eyes, while Mavot plied him with fresh showers of the subtle missive, and accompanied every discharge with a stroke on the legs, which made the other caper about in a double dance of pain and rage, alternately stooping his hand to rub his shins, or raising it to relieve his eyes.

Plouvier dealt round furious blows at random,

but enough to keep aloof a bolder assailant than his; and by degrees he freed his eyes from the sand. Then measuring the distance between him and his prey, he darted forward and attempted to sieze Mavot by the arm. But the greasy member slipped through his hold, and several similar efforts met the same result, the crooked man twisting and twining away with most ludicrous attitudes of active deformity. Plouvier gasped for breath, and dashed the foam from his mouth; while Mavot, seizing the opportunity of his exhaustion, aimed one blow at his stooping head, with such sure effect, that the blood spouted from his brow and streamed down his face, while he staggered back and fell to the earth apparently senseless.

To finish the victory he was thus rapidly gaining, Mavot limped after his victim, encouraged by the shouts of his friends. "Long live Nicholas Mavot, free burgess of Hesdin!" was the cry from all quarters; and the hitherto triumphant man flourished his cudgel for joy.

He approached the prostrate enemy, and raising the weapon high, seemed to search the most vital part for its descent, when Plouvier, who had met trick with trick, and only feigned insensibility, sprung upwards with a galvanic bound, and before the deliberate homicide could elude his grasp, he seized him by the throat with both hands, squeezed and shook him with giant force, then flung him on the sand, and with half-a-dozen well-dealt blows left him a corpse.

He gazed at him for a while to mark that his struggles were over. Then, amidst a profound silence from the astonished and horror-stricken crowd, he raised the body in his arms, and advancing to one side of the lists he flung it over the paling, at the hangman's feet, and under the gibbet from which it was so soon to dangle.

A loud shout of acclamation now burst from the crowd, who had recovered from their momentary feeling of horror. " Jacotin Plou-

vier for ever!" was now the cry; and amidst the boisterous greetings of the people, who rushed around from all sides, Duke Philip and his guests abruptly retired, disgusted at the scene, and somewhat ashamed to have been its witnesses.

To efface with all possible speed the unpleasant impression of this event, both from himself and others, Philip gave immediate orders for a justing match for the day but one following; and in the mean time had recourse to every possible variety of those occupations which then interested him and employed him most. A long closet conference with Vrank Borselen, on the details of his Friesland mission, and the particulars of his Zealand news, protracted audiences to receive the nobles from Flanders, Hainault and his other states, who came by invitation to share in the festivities of the week, employed several hours before evening. More than one deep consultation with Spalatro and Joos Wooters filled up some intervals, in a

manner most congenial to Philip's preponderating mood; and the receipt of frequent letters from several quarters gave a variety of excitement to the busy day.

One of these despatches, hastily torn open during his reception of some new-comers, seemed to afford Philip a mixture of satisfaction. He was of too subtle a nature to be often hurried into any exposure of feelings which he wished to conceal. The observers, however, could not fail to remark the variety of emotion which seemed to affect him on the perusal of this communication. He hurried over the ceremony of the scene he was engaged in; turned his attention suddenly from his visitors to some of his official attendants; and for the remainder of the day wore at times an air of deep abstraction, as if he pondered in his own despite on some embarrassing dilemma. But still the pleasures of the field, the table, or the bower, went on with undisturbed vigour; and the next morning opened with a renewed appetite for each.

Two circumstances connected with the approaching tournament seemed to excite the duke's particular interest. One was the unexpected arrival of a renowned and valiant knight, Galiot de Baltasini, chamberlain to the Duke of Milan, who was travelling in search of opportunities to distinguish himself by feats of arms, and had appeared at Hesdin, without further invitation than that held out to all comers by Philip's hospitality. The duke received him with more than common cordiality, for he had on the preceding days heard much from Spalatro of his fame, and particularly of his skill in wielding the battle-axe, the dagger, and the terrible kind of sword called an *estoc*, which were the weapons agreed on for the projected combat with Glocester.

To Baltasini's request that he might enter the lists with some of the noble knights on the following day, Philip gave ready assent, and the Milanese in consequence looked about him for advice as to whom he should measure him-

self with. Among the nobles who figured at the banquet and ball was Martin de Ternaut, one of Philip's chamberlains, who was remarkable by wearing on his left arm a lady's embroidered ruffle or *manchette*, fastened with a tie of black and blue ribbons richly studded with diamonds and pearls. As soon as Baltasini discovered this, he approached Philip, and dropping on one knee required leave to touch De Ternaut's *emprise*, as these tokens of championship were called. The duke granted the boon; when the Italian addressed himself to Toissou d'Or, the duke's herald, to know the custom of the country, as in Italy it was understood that merely touching an emprise was a challenge for an engagement of chivalry, but snatching it off the wearer a defiance to combat *à l'outrance*, for life or death. Toissou d'Or having informed him that De Ternaut meant no more in wearing his emprise than the usual course of amicable justing, the Italian advanced, and bending on one knee exclaimed—

" Noble knight, I touch your emprise, and will, with God's pleasure, accomplish every feat that you may propose or wish to do, on horseback or foot."

" Most humbly do I thank you, and welcome you, renowned champion, and soon shall you receive my written conditions of combat," replied the other, in like attitude, and measures were instantly entered on for the regulations of the contest.

The other matter which so much occupied Philip's attention was a singular gage of combat offered and accepted between a Spanish and an English knight, to which contest the duke, from motives already explained, had looked forward with peculiar anxiety. The original challenge was thus couched :—

" In the name of God, and of the Virgin Mary, I, Michael d'Orris, to exalt my name, and knowing full well the renown of the prowess of English chivalry, have, from the date of this present letter, fastened to my leg a piece of the

greve (a portion of armour) to be worn by me until I be delivered from it by some English knight, performing the following deeds of arms:

"First, to enter the lists on foot, each in whatever armour he pleases, having a sword and dagger attached to any part of his body, and a battle-axe, with the handle of such length as I shall fix on. The combat to be as follows: ten strokes with the battle-axe; and when these strokes shall be given, and the judge shall cry out 'Ho!' ten cuts with the sword, without change of armour. When the judge shall again cry out 'Ho!' we will resort to our daggers, and give ten stabs with them. Should either party lose or drop his weapon, the other may continue the use of his until the judge cry out once more 'Ho!'

"When the combat on foot shall be finished, we will mount our horses, each armed as he pleases, but with similar iron helmets, which I will provide: each shall have what sort of gorget

he pleases. I will also provide the saddles. The lances shall be of equal lengths, with which twenty courses shall be run, with liberty to strike on the fore or hinder parts of the body, from the saddle upwards.

"These courses being finished, the following combat to take place: that is to say, should it happen that neither of us be wounded, we shall perform on that or the following day, so many courses on horseback until one fall to the ground, or be wounded so that he can hold out no longer; each being armed as to his body and head according to his pleasure. The targets to be made of horn or sinews, without any iron or steel, and no deceit in them. The courses to be performed with the before-mentioned lances and saddles on horseback; each may settle his stirrups as he pleases, but without any trick!"

This challenge, dated from Paris, and sent by a poursuivant to Calais, met the following answer:—

" *To the noble and honourable person, Michael d'Orris.*

" John Prendergast, knight and familiar to the most high and puissant lord, the Earl of Somerset, sends greeting, honour and pleasure !

" May it please you to know I have just seen your letter, which tells me your valiant desire for deeds of arms, and that you wear a certain thing which is of pain to you, but which you will not take off till delivered by an English knight. I being equally desirous of gaining honour and amusement, like a gentleman, accept your challenge in the name of God, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of my lords St. George and St. Anthony, as well to ease you from the pain you are now suffering, as from my desire of measuring myself with some of the French nobility. I will write to the governor of Boulogne, on Epiphany-day next ensuing, or sooner, if possible, to acquaint him of the time and place of combat, that you may

be instantly informed of the willingness of my heart to grant your request.

"Noble, honourable, and valiant lord, I pray the Author of all good to grant you joy, honour, and pleasure, with every kind thing you may wish to the lady of your affection, to whom, I entreat that these presents may recommend me."

No answer arriving to this letter as soon as the English knight expected, he again wrote:—

"*To the honourable Michael d'Orris, &c.*

"Since to ease you from the penance you have suffered, and still do suffer in wearing the stump of the greve on your leg, I have consented to deliver you, by a combat at arms, described in your letter, and am therefore ready prepared to fulfil our engagement in arms, under the good pleasure of God, St. George, and St. Anthony, I expect you will not fail to meet me for the deliverance from your long penance; and to accomplish this, I have pro-

cured and send you a passport for forty persons and as many horses.

" I have nothing more to add, for you know how much your honour is concerned in this matter. I entreat, therefore, Cupid, the God of Love, as you may desire the affections of your lady, to urge you to hasten your journey."

This second letter meeting no reply, the English knight again wrote from Calais, which he had somewhat irregularly taken on himself to choose for the place of combat :—

" I am greatly astonished, considering the purport of my letters, that I have received no answer. I am ignorant if the God of Love, who inspired you with the courage to write your challenge, has since been displeased, and changed his ancient pleasure, which formerly consisted in urging on deeds of arms and in delights of chivalry.* He kept the nobles of

* All this passage has reference to the ancient *Cour d'Amour*.

his court under such good government, that to add to their honour, after having undertaken any deeds of arms, they could not absent themselves from the country, where such enterprize was to be performed, until it was completely finished. I would not he should find me so great a defaulter in this respect as to banish me from his court, and shall consequently remain here for another month, ready to deliver you, so that your lady and mine may know that out of respect to them, I am willing to ease you of your penance. After that period, should you not come, I intend, under God's pleasure, to return to England, where I hope to God that knights and esquires will bear witness I have not misbehaved towards the God of Love, to whom I recommend my lady and yours, hoping he may not be displeased with them at least, for any thing that may have happened."

A long interval elapsed without any notice being taken of this letter. At length another appeared from the original challenger, avowing

himself to be a native of Arragon, not a Frenchman, as the date of his first letter had caused the English knight to imagine; accounting for his silence by his absence in Spain, "fighting the quarrels of his friends," containing specific answers to Sir John Prendergast's letters, and finally renewing his challenge; but sprinkled very cautiously with reproaches and insinuations, in reply to his adversary's mixed compositions of devotion and gallantry. He expressed his readiness to come as far as Picardy to meet Prendergast; and the Court of Philip of Burgundy, the founder of the order of Toissou d'Or, and himself the very quintessence of chivalry, seemed the most natural place for deciding the long-pending affair.

To this rather an heroic reply was returned, through the medium of Perrin de Laherent, English sergeant-at-arms, to the effect that if d'Orris would pay Prendergast five hundred marks for the expences he had been put to by the non-appearance of the former on the first

occasion, he would meet him, not otherwise. There the affair rested, causing no small anxiety in the chivalric world, and to Duke Philip in particular, a degree of interest which we hope may be shared by our readers, for whom we have made a very brief abridgment of this memorable correspondence.

Opinions differed considerably on the whole transaction. Spain and England found many champions ready and willing to espouse each side of the question; and it was understood that if neither of the principals in the affair appeared, on the day fixed for the tournament at Hesdin, two knights, one a Castilian, named Jehan de Boniface, the other an Englishman, called Thomas Qué, were to step into the lists, as self-named proxies, for the honour of their respective nations and the decision of the quarrel.

Descriptions of tournaments have employed many a pen and filled many a page, and so much has been written on the subject that it has now become as trite as it is picturesque, as

familiar as it is interesting; but let all that has ever been told of these gay scenes be combined in the memory, or magnified in the imagination, and it will scarcely exceed the display of princely splendour that was exhibited in the tilt-yard of Hesdin Castle, on the day fixed on for the great justing matches that arose from the events just narrated.

We must omit the mention of many a feat of prowess, in which young knights made elder heroes jealous of their fame. Nor can we indulge in dazzling details of the beauty, the elegance and the coquetry which inspired, added grace to, or took advantage of the various passages of the day. Great injustice must we be guilty of to the noble Lord of Ternaut, in hastily glancing over his gallant mien and good conduct, "his bronzed skin, and bushy beard, and his countenance of warrior, not of maiden," as recorded by the honest chronicler of his deeds. And as much are we in default to the memory of his redoubted challenger, Galiot de Balta

sini, who, armed at all points, sprang at one bound from his saddle, "as lightly," according to the same authority, "as though he bore on his body but a silken pourpoint." With lance, estoc, and battle-axe did these champions deal many a blow and thrust on each other's head-pieces and harness, and full bravely did they accomplish their feat of arms. But nought did Duke Philip's piercing eye discover in all this wherewith to add to his own skill, or which might by any other means rival the master-twist he had learned from Spalatro, who did not fail to return, with sundry consequential winks and nods, the condescending looks occasionally thrown towards him by his all but royal patron.

And as little space may we afford to aid in the well-merited immortality of the trusty English esquire, Thomas Qué, who on this occasion gave and took full many a stroke for honour's sake, with the brave Boniface of Old Castile; each man sustaining the quarrel of another, with all the noble ferocity that chivalry

could have exacted had it been their own. Philip of Burgundy and his duchess, and his sisters, and the lady-mistress of his illegal love, and all the dignified personages before introduced to our readers, with the numerous and brilliant suite of dames and maidens of honour, of chamberlains, equerries, squires, and pages, partook to the utmost stretch in all the usual enjoyments afforded by the exciting scene. All wore an air of festive satisfaction. The fires of political resentment smouldered but did not blaze; and all the jealousies and envies of the court were decked in a motley masquerade of cordiality and candour.

There occurred, however, more than one circumstance that betrayed the under-current of ill-will, which checked this stream of politic suavity. During the justing between the Englishman and the Spaniard, frequent sarcastic remarks were thrown out by De Richemont and his wife, not pointed enough to call for retort on the part of the Duke and Duchess

of Bedford, but sufficient to hurt the sensitiveness of the latter to the quick, and not a little galling to her calm and dignified husband.

When, in the heat of the assault, Thomas Qué displayed great agility and skill, the Duchess of Bedford, turning to those next her, exclaimed,

"I' faith, he bears him like a gallant gentleman!"

"As a kestrel has resemblance to a hawk, fair sister," said Richemont with a sneer.

"Nay, but he wields his estoc with a good grace, Richemont?"

"Rather as an Irish Gallowglass might shake his stave, than as beseems one trained to chivalry."

"Hush, hush, good Anne," said Bedford, "thou see'st that Richemont does not brook the flourish of an English weapon." On this the fiery Breton was preparing a sharp retort, when he caught a look, darted from beneath Philip's bushy brows, which half com-

manded, half begged forbearance: De Richemont complied; but soon found occasion to return to his vexatious tone of sarcasm. Loud shouts, shaking of scarfs, and other marks of applause, acknowledged the efforts of the champions in one peculiarly hard struggle. The Castilian returned these inspiring tokens by courteous gestures, and seemed animated to still greater exertion. The phlegmatic Qué took no notice whatever, but steadily met his adversary's new attack.

"By St. Andrew!" cried De Richemont, turning to Burgundy, "yon English churl seems to despise our praise, while the brave Spaniard grows braver still as we applaud him."

"The Spaniard's valour springs from the eyes of the beholders—the Englishman's lies about his heart," calmly remarked Bedford.

"I know not distinctions of valour," replied Richemont; and he was preparing to add something, when Philip interrupted him—

"But I do," said the duke, "a valour of

glory and a valour of natural courage are two things—and so are a tilt-yard, and a battle-field—so a merry meeting and an onslaught of war—and so," added he with loud emphasis, and throwing down the white truncheon which he carried as judge of the tournament, "this feat of arms is done! Much honour and praise be to these noble champions—each has well sustained his country's, and his absent compatriot's name. And now give entrance, Marshal, to my noble friend, James Lalain, the flower of Brabançon chivalry. He waits at the pavilion for the signal. Sound a flourish of trumpets! Go, good De Richemont, join with the lords of Ravenstein and Beauvais to lead the young champion to the lists!"

De Richemont moved off from the duke's pavilion, in no gracious mood, to fulfil this invitation, muttering words of bitter reference to Bedford, who either did not hear, or seemed not to hear them. All eyes were now turned on the new champion, whose celebrity has found

ample record in chronicle and tradition, both which pronounce him the model of chivalric perfection. He was tall, strong, handsome, brave, and generous, the cardinal virtues of those times, when intellectual endowments were of secondary value, and the talents of hitting hard and squandering profusely raised their possessors to the most envied heights of fame.

James Lalain soon sallied forth from his pavilion of green and white silk, above which was elevated his escutcheon, blazoned with the armorial bearings of his house, an embroidered stag with sixteen antlers, each carrying two banners, to mark in all the thirty-two coats of arms of the various branches of the family, of which the champion was chief. His bacinet was on his head, his visor up, his throat uncovered; and, as was his wont in innumerable combats, he marched on foot into the lists with a proud and disdainful step, his magnificently caparisoned horse being led by pages, superbly dressed, for shew rather than use, for the con-

test to which he had this day challenged all comers, was of the batttle-axe alone, in compliance with the particular fancy for that weapon with which Duke Philip was just then notoriously inspired. He held on his left arm a shield of polished steel, which bore for device a female figure carrying a dart, and the motto, "Who loves fair lady let him watch her well." His right hand bore his weapon of prodigious weight, and he carried it in such a manner as gave the beholders to conjecture (as the worthy chronicler tell us) that he meant to make battle with the head of the axe.

The great reputation of this champion for the management of his weapon, and his more than common strength, left him few competitors for such conflicts, though in tilts on horseback, where personal force was of less moment, he always found ready rivals to contest, though very few to gain the prize. On the present occasion no adversary at first presented himself at the lists. The trumpet of Lalain flourished

and reflourished loud notes of defiance; the champion himself stalked up and down in front of the ducal pavilion, where the Duchess of Bedford held in her fair hand the embroidered scarf, wherewith she was, in honour of her rank and in compliment to her as Philip's visitor, to crown the victor. Lalain was little pleased at the negative homage paid to his prowess in the absence of a rival; and he looked as coldly proud on the occasion as a race-horse, who canters over the course without having his mettle roused or his speed put to the test.

The latest flourish had been sounded; and Philip, in his capacity of judge, was about to pronounce the valiant James Lalain entitled to the broidered trophy in default of opposition, when a cry for free passage, accompanied by the chattering fanfare from a hostile trumpet, attracted all eyes to the entrance of the lists, opposite to that where Lalain's pavilion made so gaudy and glittering a shew. A single knight, preceded by his herald, soon made his way into

the enclosed space; and while the herald strode forward, to declare his acceptance of the challenger's defiance, the knight calmly touched Lalain's shield which hung by, and then stood with his arms crossed, in an attitude of steady expectation. All the spectators pressed forward in their various places to gain a sight of this new comer; and Lalain's cheeks glowed with pleasure. Curiosity was on the stretch, but it gained no information from the knight's appearance. He was close covered with that species of light armour called a brigandine, formed of small plates of steel, falling one over the other like the scales of a serpent. His casque was quite unornamented either by plume or lambrequin; and his target of polished horn, was without gilding, motto, or device. The visor of his casque was down, and he presented altogether as perfect an incognito, as pride, guilt, or modesty, could for any possible purpose assume.

A thousand conjectures were afloat as to his

identity; wagers laid, and opinions hazarded; while Duke Philip, with evident anxiety and some impatience, but still with a dignified self-command, watched the issue of the combat, which, after a few brief forms of ceremony, was ardently begun.

Scarcely had the stranger taken his posture of defence, which Spalatro, by a loudly-uttered "bravo!" pronounced to be good, than Lalain dealt a most dexterous blow at the visor with the handle of his axe, which he wielded so adroitly, in opposition to his apparent intention of using the head only, that few could have parried such an unexpected stroke. His adversary, however, stopped it, to use a technical term from another science, with great address and skill; and he then followed up his successful parry with a shower of blows from both head and handle of his weapon, all directed at the uncovered face of his opponent, as if to punish the vain-gloriousness that disdained the protection of a visor. But James Lalain proved his

hardihood in that respect to proceed from a just confidence in his own skill. He met each assault with undaunted courage, bounded and sprung from side to side, and warded every blow with such agility and effect, that the strange knight was foiled in each attempt; and while the latter paused to recover breath after several minutes' exertion, Lalain dealt him a stroke on his casque that made him stagger several paces backward. The air rang with applause, the trumpets flourished, and the name of James Lalain was shouted to the skies. Spalatro seemed to dance on thorns, in the impossibility of communicating to Duke Philip his opinion on the various passages of the assault. But loud exclamations of encomium burst from him from time to time; and it was evident that he thought Lalain's adversary to be fully entitled to one half of the praise bestowed.

The combatants were soon again in action, and Lalain returned the former vigour of the stranger by a succession of terrible attacks,

which were met with an opposition of guard and counterguard, as deliberate as his former assaults had been fierce. Each man now threw open the outer fastenings of his hauberk, the heat becoming insupportable else; and Messire James (as the chronicler calls him), as if resolved to finish the combat, seized his battle-axe in both hands, and dealt one stroke at the stranger's head, which must, if it struck it at all, have cleft it open. But he, with a dexterity worthy of Spalatro himself, opposed the falcon-pointed helve of his weapon, so as to catch the joint of his adversary's right-hand gauntlet, and the sharp beak went clear through the sinewy arm close to the wrist, causing a stream of blood to spout out, while the lacerated limb dropped for a moment down, and the weapon fell to the ground. The stranger then instantly flung away his; but Lalain, furious at this humiliating token of courtesy, sprang forward, threw his wounded arm round his adversary's neck, and with his left hand seized him by the throat.

His grasp was as promptly and firmly met, and the combatants, brought to an equality of strength by Lalain's wound, entered on a desperate struggle.

Murmurs arose at the fierce and hostile turn the combat had taken, and all eyes glanced quick from the champions to the duke, in expectation that he would instantly throw down his truncheon. But to the surprise of all beholders, a surprise which fixed their whole attention on Philip, he, instead of preserving his usual cold air of judicial impartiality, now gave vent to a burst of party feeling, that had clearly some more vehement inspiration than mere regard to one of the champions, accompanied by indifference to the other. At first, when the arm-in-arm struggle commenced, and the strong grasp of Lalain tore open the steel clasp that fastened his adversary's breast-plate, Philip gave a start of astonishment. But this feeling soon changed to one of a furious cast; for he then sprang up, stamped on the footstool

that had supported him, and involuntarily struck his truncheon against the velvet-covered balustrade before him, with a force which shivered the symbol of command into splinters.

"Sound trumpets! sound a cessation of the fight!" cried several of the official persons who supposed the duke had intended to give the signal. But he immediately exclaimed in a loud tone—

"No! let the fight go on! let the gallant champion of Burgundy tear the false heart from his hated body!"

A scene of astonishment and confusion succeeded this abrupt speech. Every one rose from his seat — ladies, lords, knights, courtiers pressed forward round the irritated duke, who with his eyes fixed on the conflict stood for some seconds in an attitude of fierce agitation. A hundred exclamations and questions assailed him from his surrounding relatives and guests. To reiterated demands of "What moves your highness thus?" "How now, Bur-

gundy?" "Who is he?" and others of like impatient import, Philip, at last replied to Bedford, who, the calmest of the inquirers, had repeated this last question.

"Who is he, Bedford? What then, even *you* know him not? Think you to blind me so? Again, twice in one week? Go to, go to—Philip is not a child like Henry of England, nor a fool like Charles of France. You know him not indeed? Your false and fool-hardy brother—Humphrey of Glocester!"

"Humphrey of Glocester!" cried Bedford, echoed by many other voices. "Impossible! He is in England—he durst not brave such imminent peril so wantonly."

"'Tis he, by my halidome!" exclaimed Philip—"He, who has already appeared disguised and leagued with the traitress Jacqueline and her bravos in the forest-depths of Drent—who now, in defiance of danger and decency alike, comes hither to match himself against my bravest champion, as if to daunt me by his strength

and skill. But he shall know his folly and my power. All bonds are broken between his honour and my vengeance. St. Pol, I name you my marshal in this crisis—Lay hands on perverse and insulting Glocester and bring him here before me. His own brother shall witness while I adjudge his punishment."

"St. George forfend that I should interfere in such a case!" said Bedford. "I am bewildered on the point. Can this be Humphrey, whom I firmly believed to be at Westminster? mail-clad as he is, I may not distinguish this knight nor know him for my brother. By what token dost thou recognise him, Burgundy?"

"By one which cannot deceive me—one known to me alone, the polluted type of a base cause—wait, wait awhile, and the issue of this affair will justify me in all things."

The combatants were separated even while this short colloquy took place. St. Pol had gladly sprang forward, to comply with the duty prescribed to him, and laid his hands on

the concealed champion, who, panting from exertion, could make no resistance, as he was forcibly borne forward to the ducal pavilion, in the arms of the attendants by whom he was seized.

CHAPTER VIII.

As Philip stood up in the midst of his friends and subjects, to receive in his presence the man whom of all others on earth he most hated, he looked a breathing epitome of the whole spirit of his time and station, a living document of the chivalry and sovereignty of the fifteenth century. His countenance expressed all the vengeful passions of the age, curbed by the pride of feudal power. His tall figure and air of command looked well, in the sumptuous attire which he wore on this occasion. The various articles

of his dress were of the richest velvet, satin, and cloth of gold, and of the brightest tints, though black was his usual colour. A belt, sparkling with diamonds, hung from his shoulder. His surcoat and mantle were trimmed with full fifty English yards of silver-worked ribbon, in knots and rosettes. His embroidered cap, in shape like a casque of war, was surmounted by a panache, the *aigrette* of which was composed of twenty-one heron, and the *cimier* of twenty-four ostrich, plumes; while seventeen peacock-feathers streamed down in the fashion of a lambrequin behind. The massive gold collar, studded with precious stones, from which hung the medal and effigy of the golden fleece that marked its owner chief of the order, was entwined with other chains and rosaries, ornaments with which Philip's person was at all times profusely decorated. He was beyond comparison the most richly attired of all the brilliant group; but all were more or less distinguished by the overabundant costliness of the

prevalent taste. Among the courtiers twenty-four were seen in a splendid livery of vermilion silk, loaded with embroidery and stiff with jewels, being gifts from the duke to those who were chosen for the honour of justing with him on the occasion. The squires and pages of each of these wore brilliant suits, thick covered with flame-coloured embroidery; and in short the whole assembly presented a most magnificent and dazzling display. All persons stood in breathless expectation, their looks shifting alternately from Philip to the entrance of the pavilion, where Glocester was every instant expected to appear, and their ears ready to catch the words of resentment and harsh dignity with which their duke was evidently preparing to assail his too rash arrival.

And very soon the Count of St. Pol was seen forcing his way through the crowd of guards and attendants, leading, with no courteous grasp, the prisoner knight, whose still unraised visor concealed his face from the gazing crowd.

Every one marvelled that the imperious Humphrey of Glocester submitted to be thus brought forward without a struggle; but their astonishment was increased tenfold at seeing the object of their scrutiny, as soon as he reached the foot of the elevated platform where Philip stood, throw himself on one knee, and bow down before the duke as any of his own vassals or servitors might have done! Bedford, with the English lords in his suite, started in surprise and displeasure, while their cheeks glowed at the humiliating act. De Richemont, St. Pol, and the Burgundian and Brabançon nobles could not repress a smile of triumph. Philip's lip curled disdainfully, and he cast a look of proud contempt on the prostrate knight. He seemed for a moment thrown back from the high moral attitude of majesty to which he had been working himself up, and he paused as if he wanted words to address an humbled suppliant, though he had been ready and fluent enough to reproach a fallen but daring foe.

During this momentary pause, the kneeling knight took advantage of the liberty afforded to his hands, and rapidly undid the fastening of his casque, which he raised and took from his head, shewing to the astonished throng, the fine features, the wondering look, and the inquiring gaze of Vrank Van Borselen.

"Sir Francon de Borsele!" uttered the bystanders, in a chorus of amaze. Philip alone was silent. On discovering who the suspected knight really was, he started with surprise. Disappointment next thrilled his frame; and it seemed as if a convulsion passed through it, while, with compressed lips and frowning brows, a short and broken sigh involuntarily escaped him. The next variation of feeling was evident rage, but not of that kind which was expected to have burst on his captive enemy in invective and reproach. It was deadly and silent; his cheek grew pale, and as he clenched the diamond-studded handle of his rapier, he sternly, but with assumed courtesy, spoke to those around him:—

"Princes, my cousins, and good friends, and ye noble dames, my wife and sisters, fair countess and the rest, bear with me awhile, I pray you. Let all seek the castle—the morning sports are over. I will rejoin my noble company ere long, when I have fitly dealt fairly with a bold, base hypocrite—a deep and ungrateful traitor!"

The parties thus addressed silently hastened from the pavilion, Bedford having previously retired, not choosing to remain to witness his brother's humiliation, which he felt to be deserved, and therefore did not attempt to avert. The duke's eyes were piercingly fixed on Vrank, as he spoke the latter words just mentioned; the accused youth had sprung on his feet, and looked at once paralyzed with wonder, and covered with crimson flush of indignation.

"Traitor!" echoed he, in a half-choked tone of mingled astonishment and defiance; but the words by which he would have followed up this exclamation stuck in his throat.

"Traitor!" rejoined Philip, advancing to the suspected culprit, with his fist clenched, and his lips quivering. "Ay, most manifest and wicked traitor! Could I have believed even evidence so convincing?—So young!—so criminal! Can I trust my eyes that look on the badge of your infamy?"

And then, as if unable to keep his temper within any bounds, he snatched at the girdle of blue silk, which Vrank had so faithfully worn, and so unconsciously suffered to escape from his bosom, and dashing it on the floor, he trampled it under his feet, exclaiming—

"Thus perish every type of her, the wanton, and of him, her usurping paramour! Thus be them, and their cause and its upholders trodden down! As this patent for infamy is defaced and degraded, so may she who gave, and he who dared to carry it, be crushed beneath my vengeance!" Then turning to the officers, who remained in close attendance on his person, he added in a steady and deliberate tone, and with

a countenance of perfectly recovered calmness, " Let my orders be now well looked to! You, John Vilain, my trusty Fleming—you, who saved my life in the bloody Field of Mons, the first of my pitched battles—you, whom I dubbed knight on that desperate day, be now my guardian on *this*, not less dangerous. I name you captain of my body-guard, archers, lancers, and arquebusses all. Stand close by me, for I am beset and betrayed. My warning letter was not for nought; but I little dreamed this bosom-nourished serpent was one of those it pointed out. Watch this traitor well, good John; and let the Englishman Qué, and that wily Orleanite, Baltizini, be placed in close arrest with him they call Spalatro. The plot is deep and manifold—but I shall sift it! Let old William Le Begue be summoned to attend me in my closet—if cunning leads to safety, he is my best counsellor. To the donjon then with that ingrate!"

Another ireful glance thrown on Vrank ac-

companied these words, and before he could collect a phrase to oppose this torrent of accusation, the duke had left the pavilion, and he found himself seized still more rudely than before, by some of the coarse guardsmen who were to lead him to his prison. A whole volume of thought passed through the mind of the astonished captive, as he saw the gorgeously-dressed figure of the duke pass from the pavilion, and heard the clattering hoofs and the tingling of the rich caparisons, which told that his horse was brought forward to bear him away. Vrank was insensible to the indignities intended for him by the satellites of the despot, while his intense reverie went on.

"Good God!" thought he, "what is this world, and what am I? Do I deserve this? Innocent—honest—faithful to this prince—devoted to his service. To be treated like a felon slave at the very moment that I merited and reckoned on praise, honour, and distinction! Yet," continued he, for his keen sense of justice

and his candid consideration for others, even then, was awake—" yet this is not perhaps all undeserved—it is clear I have brought it on myself. That fatal girdle! Who or what can *she* be—the Circe that threw around me what I thought would be a periapt against ill, but which seems, like the spell in which she has bound my mind, the bane of well-being—the passport to ruin? The duke is not unjust—he will not punish without guilt—and this gust of rage subsided, I know he will hear me, ere he condemns."

These reflections had scarcely passed through his brain, when they found their best illustration in the reappearance of Duke Philip in the pavilion. This proud but clear-sighted despot had read at once in Vrank's looks, and in his indignant repetition of the word traitor, a complete evidence of innocence. Prompt as he was violent, he was suddenly struck with the remorse which a high mind and a proud station may at all times act upon without fear of miscon-

struction, and he repented the outrage offered to his faithful and favourite follower in the very moment of its commission. He determined to repair the wrong on the spot—to wipe out the disgrace he had so hastily inflicted—to give at least an opportunity of explanation for what had appeared to him almost incredible, while all his better feelings told him it could not be intentionally base. He therefore quickly dismounted from his horse, ere even he had turned his head toward the castle; and ordering his followers to suspend the arrest he had erewhile commanded, and to remain outside the pavilion, he re-entered it alone, just as John Vilain, the redoubted warrior to whom he had confided the charge of Vrank, was, with the rough authority of Flemish notions, in the very act of preparing a scarf to bind the arms of his prisoner—his horror of treachery and treason telling him to hold no terms of delicacy with a culprit, denounced by his master's own lips. Philip, in his usual steady and decided tone, ordered Vilain and

his assistant guardsmen to retire. Obedience was as prompt as the command was peremptory, and in a moment more, the Duke and Vrank Borselen stood together face to face, without any one to interrupt or observe them.

While the astonished youth recovered in that moment all his presence of mind and self-command, and as a rush of innate dignity gave an instant tone of force and elevation to his look and manner, Philip addressed him, with all the ease of despotism unbending in the double consciousness of power and condescension.

" Sir Francon, I have been hasty, and I hope I may add, unjust; for princely wrong may be atoned, but a vassal's treachery cannot. Take this ungloved hand—not to press to your lips in the etiquette of court favour, but to grasp within your own as the pledge of my regret and the gage of my esteem."

Vrank stood still and silent while the duke spoke, and ere the last phrase was finished he had deliberately folded his arms across his

breast. Philip started back and drew up his head haughtily, as if doubting the possibility of what he saw.

"What!" exclaimed he, "do my eyes indeed deceive me not? Does any man that lives hesitate to accept the proffered hand of Philip of Burgundy? Does my own servitor, my vassal's son, a pardoned——" traitor, he would have added, in his returning anger, had not Vrank stopped him short.

"For your own sake, Duke Philip, for the sake of honour, truth, and chivalry, do not utter one injurious word, to overflow the full measure of the wrong you have done me, and close the gate against all possible atonement. Your follower, devoted and faithful, I am;—but *pardoned* I am not, and will not be—for to accept forgiveness is to acknowledge guilt. Nor yet mistake me for a proud fool, insensible to the wide difference between us till you did me wrong, thereby reducing yourself to my level, though it could not raise me to your

height. Hear me, my sovereign! hear me out —I appeal to your reason and your justice against wrath and rashness. I am innocent of all crime, not merely in commission but in thought. I never did ill to mortal man, much less to you, to whom I have sworn fealty and service, for whom I have shed my blood, well paid for by a glorious meed of confidence and honour. But you have outraged me—degrade me you could not—in the face of this whole court—my friends, my fellow soldiers, princes, lords and ladies, natives, and of foreign lands, to none of whom, I may say without a boast, was my untarnished name unknown. And what is the offered salve for the deep wound thus given so wantonly? Your hand, in privacy—as if insult and injury may be borne in the world's full blazon, and their reparation doled out by stealth! that is not fitting for either of us, duke. No honour can be dealt me, if innocent, by the secret pressure of the hand that was erewhile raised in menace to my

beard, while it would be sullied by my grasp if I am indeed a fair mark for its clenched violence, and for your but half-revoked suspicions! No, my noble prince," continued Vrank, rising in tone and emotion from the evident effect produced by his words on Philip, "no! wash out the stain of your reproaches by the broad stream of a public and ample retraction; or if I am still accused of aught unworthy knighthood and manliness, let me prove my honour in those yet open lists, with the best and boldest champion of your court."

Philip was doubly affected as this speech was uttered. He involuntarily admired, and inwardly acquitted, the brave youth, whose true dignity of mind threw that of rank into the shade; yet he winced painfully under the dishonour, which he felt done to his station by every word, look and sentiment of his young lecturer. He could have overcome either feeling separately; but together they were too much even for his experienced haughtiness.

He was completely at fault. Pride, power, and duplicity were all put for the time in abeyance; and Philip stood for awhile, if not actually abashed and humbled, at least in temporary confusion. His character never reached that pitch of true magnanimity, which would have prompted its possessor to throw his arms round the young knight's neck, and find honour instead of degradation in the act. Philip, on the contrary, drew back his lately outstretched hand; and not knowing exactly how to reply to what he had listened to, he took refuge in the ready resource for those who are at a loss for an answer—he proposed a question.

"Tell me, Sir Francon, without guile or sophistry, how came you by that girdle, the renewed sight of which transported me the readier beyond myself, inasmuch as my rage at seeing you bear the badge of treason was proportioned to the value which I placed on your fealty?"

Vrank, without noticing the compliment, met

this inquiry by a plain and brief recital of his adventure in the Zeven-volden, and minute descriptions of every actor in the scene. Philip listened with acute interest, having during Vrank's progress carelessly flung himself into his lately occupied chair of state. When Vrank concluded, the duke, having quite recovered his self-possession, said, in a tone rendered impressive by its sternness and by the penetrating look which accompanied it:—

"Sir Francon, you have by chance picked up the clew of as deep a mystery as ever was entangled in forest—your hunting-party was no mean one, for its chief persons were Bishop Zweder of Utretcht, Humphrey of Glocester, and Jacqueline of Holland."

At the mention of this last name Vrank felt a sudden glow rush through him; his heart swelled, and his brain reeled in the drunkenness of ambitious joy. Such was the electric effect of a thousand condensed associations, all warm, bright, and glorious—a full draught

from imagination's boiling fountain. "Jacqueline of Holland! the most noted woman in Europe, the affianced of princes, the equal of queens, the regal beauty, the heroine of her age!—*She* clasped in my arms, she the giver of the gage that cinctured her own lovely form, she whose lips thanked me, whose eyes looked into my heart's cells, and left a ray of love in their dark recess!" Sweet were the thoughts of that first impassioned moment, in which Vrank's soul seemed to burst its thrall and revel in immortal joy. But an icy pang as quickly succeeded to this, when reality laid its cold and heavy hand upon his mind, and he paid the tax imposed by nature on the faculty of prompt good sense, in finding an instant check to the careering flight of fancy.

"Jacqueline of Holland!" thought he again—"the thrice-mated wife, the self-divorced usurper, the firebrand of my country, the accused adulteress, the reputed poisoner, my parent's detestation, my prince's bane! Why, oh! why did

I ever meet with her! Why did not the fierce monster gore me to death by her side, in the exquisite illusion that I felt for one as worthy as she is beautiful!"

In the fixedness of his reverie Vrank clasped his hands together, his head sank on his breast, and a faint sickness seemed to spread across his very mind.

"Well, Sir Francon!" exclaimed Duke Philip.

"Well!" echoed Vrank starting, in unconscious repetition of the word.

"Well, canst thou now find pardon for thy prince, if, seeing round thy neck the girdle clasped by my own hand as a gift of early affection, on her who *was* my cousin, when in the early days of girlhood she was affianced at Compêgne to John of France, I should for a brief space have believed the witnesses of my eyes, and held you for a traitor too, when all mankind turns recreant? I say, Sir Francon, canst thou in knighthood's candour forgive the wrong I did thee?"

The air of dignified remorse which accompanied these words completely overpowered Vrank. He saw in the question and the way in which it was put a host of excuses, and almost of justifications, for all that the Duke had done. No one ever possessed more fully than Vrank van Borselen that precious quality of candour which enables us to imagine ourselves in the situations of others, makes allowance for their conduct, and judges of them as we would be judged. He for a moment forgot his own emotions in picturing those which must have agitated Philip, in the false impression borne out by evidence so strong; and it was only a conservative instinct of self-dignity, so peculiarly his own, that prevented the ingenuous youth from throwing himself at his proud master's feet, and receiving as a boon the atonement which was his by right. This he did not do; and perhaps Philip did not esteem him the less for standing manfully up, while he gave utterance to sentiments at once generous and modest. But he

most assuredly did not love him the more, for failing to display the cringing suppleness which gains favour in the sight of despotism, and on which the duke reckoned when he put on his mock air of proud humility. In fact, Philip "the Good" never forgave Vrank Borselen for the unjust indignity he had himself offered him, or for the noble manner in which the injured youth received the apology his temporary good feeling urged him to make. The man who would stand well with a tyrant must always stand below him. To reach his level creates his dislike; to rise above it ensures his hatred. Vrank found out this lesson in the sequel.

But for the present there was a compromise between Philip's new-born enmity, of which he was yet unconscious, and his long regard, which could not all at once become extinct. He held a still further parley with Vrank, the result of which was, on the part of the latter, a solemn disavowal of all connection with the cause of Jacqueline, an engagement to return to her the

fatal pledge of her gratitude, (to give to her feelings no stronger epithet,) and a promise that he would immediately place on his arm the silver plaquet, with the effigy of the rising sun, the badge that day adopted by St. Pol and some of his associates, to designate their conviction of the noon-day clearness of Philip's cause, against the as manifest usurpation of Jacqueline.

Philip, on his side, avowed his anxiety to render full justice to Vrank's honour and fidelity, in the most public and unhesitating way. He in consequence quitted the pavilion, and walked towards the castle, leaning on the arm of Vrank and conversing with him, with an air the most familiar and confidential.

At sight of this unexpected result of the late scene, the courtiers, guards, and attendants gazed in mute astonishment. The envious, a large majority, writhed with many a mental pang. The generous, a scanty band, glowed with pleasure. All prepared to congratulate

the reinstated favourite; and those who, half an hour before, had ransacked their brains for reasons to justify the duke and renounce the disgraced knight, now laboured to discover arguments to uphold the integrity of the one, and defend the tergiversation of the other.

CHAPTER IX.

While the numerous inmates of Hesdin Castle prepared for the grand banquet which was to crown this busy day, and while Vrank van Borselen with difficulty escaped from the assiduities of his so suddenly converted friends and admirers, to make a visit of cordial inquiry to James Lalain, his wounded rival in the tournay, Duke Philip was closely closeted with old William le Begue, the most wily, crafty and crooked statesman, who had up to that epoch figured in the field of politics.

This old man, furrowed by the heavy traces of time, and grey in a long course of guilt, had been from early youth employed in the service of the dukes of Brabant, and had reached the dignity of chief-governor to John, the nominal husband of Jacqueline, at the time of their ill-assorted match. William le Begue was known to be the chief instigator of all the repulsive conduct of this imbecile boy to his high-minded spouse; and it was scarcely a secret that the minister was urged on in his hostility towards her by rewards from Philip, whose object was to force her to the escape which she had effected from her tyrant, who thus became completely the dupe and instrument of the "good duke," in his designs on the new duchy.

When Philip was appointed governor of Holland and Zealand by his cousin John, as before related, the crafty old statesman was attached to his person as the chief of his council; and his sinister and congenial advice was at all times regarded by Philip with more attention

than that of all his other ministers put together. The conference which now took place between this well-met pair on the subject of Philip's armament against Jacqueline and her possessions, with all the entangled ramifications of injustice and fraud, would furnish an instructive picture of princely bad faith and statesman-like subserviency. But we cannot check the progress of our story by entering on minute details. Neither would it suit our present purpose, to lay before our readers some of the secret information which Philip confided to his creature. He displayed to him *one* particular instance of perfidy, but all turning to his own advantage, which by no means surprised, though it greatly pleased the old minister; for his bad opinion of mankind prepared him for acts of baseness, and he was delighted at every new proof that his own was borne out by general example.

Arguing on the instance in question, he used his best efforts, and successfully, to work on

Philip's suspicion—the most prominent feature of despotism—and he readily persuaded him that nothing but treachery surrounded him where he at present was, or awaited him on the course he was about to pursue. The grand basis of all William le Begue's policy was contempt for mankind and unmitigated selfishness. By disbelief in the honesty of others he sought to justify his own dishonesty; and he never extended mercy or charity to his fellows, from the conviction that he deserved neither for himself. The aim of his present efforts with Philip, therefore, was to shake his reliance on the fidelity of all his allies, and to convince him that a complicated web of plot and counter-plot was woven, in which it was meant to involve and finally destroy him. He had already worked on him with great effect: no one escaped his sweeping imputations. Vrank van Borselen was, according to the minister, assuredly guilty with the rest, notwithstanding all his apparent candour; and Philip more readily acceded to this

most monstrous of all conclusions, from his growing dislike, and his resolution to force up a justification for the feeling, which had no source but his hasty injustice and the self-humiliation it entailed.

Floris van Borselen, too, the father, and all his Kabblejaw adherents, were pronounced unsound and treacherous, by the wide-grasping sentence of William le Begue. But for this last condemnation a clew is readily found, in his determination to obtain the whole government of Jacqueline's doomed dominions for himself, as minister to Philip, acting for John of Brabant, and his consequent resolution to remove every obstacle on fit opportunity, but more particularly Floris van Borselen, whose station politically as well as by rank and birth, marked him for the first places of honour and confidence, in the country on whose anticipated conquest Philip was now bent.

The result of the conference was a resolution that the duke should dissemble his suspicion,

so as the more surely to catch the conspirators unawares; and that Baltasini and Spalatro, who were "pricked," as on the lists of the Roman tyrants, should be most closely watched, no doubt being admitted by the colleagues in conscription of their being employed by the dowager Duchess of Orleans, who was a princess of Milan, from whence they avowedly came to execute some design against Philip's life. The English all present at Hesdin, from Bedford down to Thomas Qué, were also to be strictly guarded against, as implicated in the interest and revenge of Glocester. The nobles, generally, be their various provinces what they might, did not escape accusal. Vrank van Borselen was most particularly included, as the undoubted agent either of Jacqueline's hostile purposes, or of his father's ambitious projects—or both.

These points all settled and agreed on, old William le Begue prepared to take his seat at the banquet, in his accustomed decoration of

deceitful smiles; while Philip, the powerful, the brave, and the ambitious, submitted to the degrading yoke of his jealous fears, and took the place of honour in the feasting-hall, the only one who wore a coat of mail under his cloth of gold, or who dared not partake the delicacies of the board, without their being first tasted by the functionary whose duty it was to submit the fidelity of the household to so odious a test.

And now would be the moment to administer large doses of description, were it not our object to satisfy the thirst for knowledge of the human heart, and the numerous vicissitudes of individual adventure, rather than that which drains the fountain of mere antiquarian research. Were the latter alone to be the staple of our industry, we know nothing of the age which now occupies our pen that affords a livelier notion of its grotesque magnificence and preposterous bad taste, than the minute details of such an entertainment as the one given on the day in question,

by Philip of Burgundy, to his princely and distinguished company.

Yet it is hard to resist the temptation of entering on so fertile a theme, and the strongest dissuasive, after all, is the fear that some other of the various pens which have been dipped in the same source, but whose productions are unknown to us, have already traced for the readers of historical romance sketches of such a scene as that to which we wish to transport ours. At any rate, the pages of old Oliver de la Marche, that verbose detailer of chivalric record, are easy of access, and are most probably "done into English," for the benefit of those who cannot sift the original seed from the abounding chaff of the old language and the old style. To those pages the curious are referred for pins'-point details of dress and accoutrement, dishes and decorations, and all the wholesale extravagances of feast and tournament, during the sumptuous sway of the House of Burgundy.

In that venerable and valuable tome will be

found an ample relation of such a banquet as that now given in the great hall of Hesdin Castle, hung with rich tapestry, and filled with all the splendid accessories of profuse magnificence. There will be found a list of the princes and princesses, knights, dames and damsels, the chamberlains, esquires, servitors, archers and arquebusiers; the entrées and ornaments of the several tables, among which were a church, a castle, a windmill, a ship, each filled with suitable tenants, "all alive, ho!" and singing to the praise and glory of the good duke and his compeers. Then came the ten or a dozen *entremets*, fantastic representations of living things, stags, swans, lions, wild boars and other monsters, all "subtilely and marvellously made;" not forgetting a huge pie, containing twenty-eight choristers, whose chorus was ready at every change of scene, and a naked mannekin and an undraperied maiden, who respectively showered rose-water and hyppocras on their thirsty admirers, in a fashion, that to modern,

and particularly to English taste, savours more of liberality than decency.

But of all such fantastic representations, the mystery of Jason, on his expedition for the conquest of the golden fleece, the savage bulls, the serpents, tigers, dragons and giants destroyed by this prince of sheep-shearers, the sowing of the teeth, and the springing up of the armed men, was *par excellence* the most prodigious; varied by manifold pieces of poetry interspersed through each entertainment, but which we shall not aid in inflicting on posterity.

It was in the midst of such a scene as this, but subsequent to the one now acted, that Duke Philip, and twenty of the most redoubted knights of the celebrated order which the mystery or mummery just alluded to was meant to honour, conceived the insensate project, and consecrated their never-to-be-fulfilled intention, of a new crusade, by the solemn utterance of those impiously ludicrous *vows* which gave the title to the most renowned repast of those days,

when Philip pledged himself, "by God his creator, the glorious Virgin Mary, the ladies, and the *pheasant*, that he would take the Cross, and expose his body for the defence of the christian faith, against the damnable emprise of the Grand Turk and the Infidels." But on the occasion we have now to deal with, "the good duke" had not reached that pitch of fanatical foolery, and only occupied his mind and put forth his energies for a crusade of spoliation against every principle of manly generosity or moral right.

And even while Philip sat in his state, throwing round broad glances of pride at the assembled chivalry, and lavishing his smiles and phrases of gallantry on the Countess of Salisbury at his side, a new pang of distrust was sent through him, by the discovery of another warning billet, ingeniously concealed in one of the offerings of fruit, served up to tempt his abstemious appetite.

"By Heavens, this is too bad!" cried the

tortured despot, as he read the scribbled assurance that a poisoned dagger was destined for his bosom. "What! is my power for nought but to ensure me never-ceasing pain! Am I denied even one hour of relaxation! Are signs, and portents, and prophecies to hover over my head, while blade and shaft are for ever aimed against my heart! Who dares to defile my pleasure and embitter this festive scene by such a foul device as this? Break up the feast! Let those throat-straining minstrels hush their noise! Close the doors to all, and let strict search go round—none may prove exemption from the test! Out on this pageantry—draw close the curtain—I am weary of the scene!" and he flung himself back in his seat, as if in incontrollable disgust.

Such was, as usual, the first sally of Philip's despotic temper, acting on the impulse of sudden emotion. But this was the vice of his station rather than of his character; for he was not constitutionally passionate, and had he been

born a private man instead of an absolute prince, his general suavity had never probably been disfigured by out-bursts so foreign to its nature. But it has been seen that he easily recovered from these angry moods; and that considerations of good manners, which so often pass for good feeling, quickly recalled him to a sense of what was due to others and becoming in himself. The whole company now rose, in astonishment and confusion, as the huge doors of the hall were shut in, and the active partizans of despotism prepared to busy themselves in obedience to its commands. Philip stamped his foot and raised his hand, and all the incipient tumult was hushed, as promptly as if some magician with his wand had stilled an elemental storm. Turning to the Countess of Salisbury, and shewing her the scroll, which he had crumpled in his angry grasp, Philip smiled his most affable smile, and said, loud enough to be heard by all who sat at his own table—

"Can the loveliest of women forgive the weakest of mortals, if the sight of this ill-omened scrawl transported him beyond himself in one sense, while her charms at the same time did so in another? My first atonement is due *here*. Friends, all accept it; and let my punishment be found in your merciful oblivion of my self-forgetfulness! Resume your seats, that the festivities may go on! Let my impatient mood be forgotten—nor may the bold traitor who has put forth this threat, be gratified by its having caused more than a moment's disturbance."

A gracious smile from the English countess answered the appeal, and the good Duchess of Burgundy benevolently strove to soothe her truant spouse. The princesses, his sisters, and their lords, all uttered consoling words to the duke; and the buzz of agitation was fast subsiding, under the influence of his echoed expressions, which were passed successively along from one table to another, when St. Pol, who

sat near to William le Begue, and had closely whispered with him and De Richemont during the bustle, rose from his seat and exclaimed—

"Noble Burgundy, my good and trusty cousin, I cannot sit silent, while I see you thus unjustly tried and harassed, by the consequences of your too generous confidence. You have proclaimed free welcome to all comers on these days of open hospitality, and it is clear to all but you, that your bounty is abused. Strangers and wayfarers fill your halls, unknown and un-recognized for what befits the guests of Burgundy. The broad behests of chivalry should be obeyed, no doubt, here in its very place of honour. But these are perilous times, and ripe with risk. I see not why any he that feasts at your board, should wear even negative disguise, as those who come unbadged and unpledged to your cause most surely do. I and some few good friends of mine, Richemont, Saintrailles, Isle d'Adam, Andrew d'Humières, John Vilein, Francon de

Borselen, and other brave associates sprinkled through this noble company, bear boldly the token of the cause to which each good arm that shews the badge is pledged. Methinks that they who still withhold a like display should now in this distinguished presence tell for why; and I propose that all who may not justify dissent—which is indeed but treason to truth and right—will raise a brimming cup and drink the pledge I offer now to all—Philip the Good, and his good cause, against usurping Jacqueline and those who do her aid or wish her well!"

"Bravely said, St. Pol. I quaff my goblet cordially to the pledge!" cried Richemont, rising, and half emptying a flask of champagne into his drinking glass.

"Health, Burgundy, to thee and thy emprize! I have not yet affixed the placquet to my arm, but hatred to thy foes, home-bred or foreign, revolted Hollanders or faithless Englishmen, is deep graven on my heart!"

While he gulped down the sparkling draught,

the Duke of Britanny was preparing some short and pithy sentence of adhesion to these sentiments; but Bedford, with an air of peculiar dignity, rose up, and forced him to denote his consent by the silence far more suitable to his oratorical deficiencies.

"Again, brother of Burgundy," said Bedford, "and in a scene like this, must these intemperate sallies be uttered and replied to? In sooth it does seem as though myself, and my noble lords attendant, with those other knights and 'squires, who came here from our island at the call of chivalric summons, are marked for insult, and that Richemont is its chosen mouthpiece. For myself, so help me Heaven! I heed it not—it passeth by me like a murky cloud of night upon a traveller's path; but as my country's representant I cannot brook it, Burgundy, and will not, by St. George! What! is the realm of my fathers then so poor in place, so newly robbed of rank and honour, that every bravo who puts a placquet on his arm may run

old England down, and rave and rant in the halls of Hesdin, like some swing-buckler in a brothel? Duke Philip, my worthy brother, my country's ally, my youthful sovereign's vassal, I call on thee, firmly and loudly to quash at once this spirit of mutinous outrage, or by my halidome, I quit the castle on the spot, in personal wrath and national enmity! I have spoken."

These spirited words, to which the regent's high and solemn air gave tenfold effect, struck forcibly on the haughty lords against whom they were addressed. Bedford talked of wrath, but not like an angry man; he threatened, but not like a bully; he swore, but not like a blasphemer; he uttered words of unusual force, but they did not seem as if strained up to answer a purpose. It was as though the essence of England's might had rushed through his mind, and given a sacred energy to words, which might be thought to come from the embodied

spirit of his country, rather than from a mere mortal champion of her rights.

The confederates, who had erewhile talked so boldly, were struck dumb. The Duke of Brittany alternately played with his beard or twisted his thumbs; and even old William le Begue threw glances of uncertain cunning on Philip and the others, as though doubtful of what part to take, or what sentiments to acknowledge. The various effects on the rest of the assembly may be imagined, and Philip appeared as if mentally weighing all opinions during a pause of some few minutes, and amidst the murmured observations that rose up through the hall. He at length raised his head from the level of soliloquy to that of dictatorial speech, and said aloud,

" My princely guests, brothers and friends, few words must settle this moot point. I am not enviously situated, as Heaven knows, and all will grant—let all then hold me in some kindness, while I hope to satisfy all. Let me

be umpire in this wordy war, which well I could wish turned into silent peace. Richemont, I prithee, cease all sarcasms. 'Tis due to our good brother, the noble regent here, and his princely suite of followers and familiars; and for *his* part, I pray him to let my trusty friends bear what badge to them seems fitting, nor throw dishonour on my rights by disparaging it or them."

"Philip, I meant not that," said Bedford.

"Nay, hear me on," replied Burgundy, "I claim the privilege of host and umpire both—I ask no explanation nor exact excuse."

"Excuse! I believe thee well, good brother, nor do I offer such, in troth. I spoke not to thy dispraise or dishonour, Burgundy, but only claimed the courtesy that England is used to, and *must* have, if I sit by while she or her sons are named. This is no scene of mappery or closet-council, and Richemont must be told the difference if he knows it not. Bedford, in Philip's cabinet, is a private man—

here, in this open hall, he is England's champion, the scion of her kings, her prop of honour, and as such he will uphold her to the stretch of doom."

"Well, well, it shall be as thou wilt, good Bedford," said Philip, soothingly; for he saw that the regent's blood was most unusually up, and he dreaded that De Richemont and St. Pol might hurry on some premature breach that might mar all his plans, by forcing Bedford to join his brother Humphrey's quarrel, and throw the power of England into the scale against his own with Jacqueline. But this was a needless alarm, for Bedford was too deep a politician, and too much devoted to his country's interests to let him so risk them, notwithstanding the high tone which he felt called on by every sense of policy and pride to assume.

"Fair brother, it shall be as thou wilt—England and all her chivalry shall hold their titles unattainted—"

"By sarcasm or surmise—nought else can

dare assail them," said Bedford, in the same uncompromising tone.

"Big words, Bedford!" muttered De Richemont, with a bitter sneer.

"They are the echo of great deeds, Richemont," calmly, but with conscious pride in her husband's fame, replied the Duchess Anne; and the supper-hall was about to become, like the breakfast-room on a former occasion, the forum of family dispute, had not William le Begue and St. Pol, taking their cue from Philip's expressive glances, restrained De Richemont and implored him to suppress his ire. The better to keep him silent, St. Pol again rose up, and said with assumed good-temper, but still in sinister design—

"Verily, good lords, this honours not over much my offered pledge. No glass, save Richemont's, is emptied yet. Burgundy, call a full cup—I claim the privilege of the board—and sure I am, no friend of mine or yours will baulk at the plain form in which my pledge was worded."

"St Pol," said Bedford, "I must demur against covert insidiousness as well as open taunt. I wish all well to Burgundy, but cannot pledge confusion to my father's son, even in the mask wherewith you meant to disguise it. Health to thee, Philip, and success in each *good* cause, for there I hold it as mine own!"

The associates saw that Bedford was too wary to be caught in the snare, designed to commit him in the contest against Glocester and Jacqueline; and St. Pol, with sufficient tact to turn from a point where he had met such firm repulses, exclaimed with assumed wonder—

"What more, good Bedford, could we ask of thee? The saints forbid that I should aim to implicate thee in a quarrel with thy own flesh and blood, even though it forms the shrine of such a heart as Glocester's! Up goblets to my pledge! Let English *friends* be neutrals if they will; but there are, please Heaven, none others here who will not drink success to good Duke Philip, and death to the usurper of his rights."

A hundred goblets were held up and quickly drained, while as many voices echoed the toast. The knights who wore the silver placquets were conspicuous for zeal, and not the least so was Vrank Borselen, whose fever of mind ever since the scene of the morning, kept him burning with a combination of emotions. But in the midst of these animated groups one strange exception was observed; and attention was quickly drawn upon this individual, whose badge of nobility told that he was entitled to his place at the board, while his bushy beard and brows, and the hood which, in the fashion of the day, he wore in a somewhat inelegant fancy on his head, completely screened him from recognition. While all around him stood up, doing boisterous honour to the toast, he sturdily kept his seat, nor deigned even to fill his goblet from the fresh flask placed beside him by an attendant varlet. Murmurs rose high; and St. Pol, whose keen eye watched all around, soon noticed so remarkable a defaulter to the general test.

" Beshrew me, princes and lords," cried he, " if we have not one among us, not English neither as I guess, whom the regent's qualms have converted from our common cause. Fair Sir, may I in knightly courtesy ask if you are a Briton born ?"

" Or a French slave on his English master's sufferance ?" added De Richemont, with a spiteful emphasis.

" Neither a Briton nor a Brabanter, St. Pol —nor on a minion's errand, nor by right of forfeited parole, De Richemont," exclaimed the questioned knight, in a tone and accent that spoke a volume of Dutch harshness and daring.

" I know that voice, by Heavens !" cried St. Pol.

" You may never forget it, my good count, since the day it called you so loudly and so vainly before Loignies, in Hainault, to turn and face one who is little used to wait for his enemy's summons."

" Who, then, is this ? Let some one answer me !" exclaimed the Duke of Burgundy, with an imperious tone.

"I best can answer the question, noble duke, and my much honoured host; I am called Ludwick of Urk in my native land, and not quite unknown even here as Louis de Monfoort," said the bold Hollander, standing erect, throwing off his hood, and shewing his shaggy visage and sturdy person, like an unabashed bear before a company of hunters taken by surprise.

The sensation produced by this avowal was prodigious; and all order of decorum or etiquette was violated, in the efforts of the company to get a good view of the redoubted leader of the rebel Hoeks, the most noted champion of Duke Philip's destined victim, and his deadliest foe. But so much was the high sense of knightly honour encouraged by this powerful sovereign, that not an individual present dreamt of violence or insult to this lone warrior, in the heart of his enemy's stronghold. After the first buzz of astonishment had subsided, Philip addressed the unbidden guest with all the courtesy of chivalry.

"The brave in arms are ever welcome to my halls," said he, "and you, Sir Louis de Monfoort, bear your title to noble treatment in your wide-spread renown; no pledge or promise repugnant to your feelings shall be exacted of you. You are thrice welcome to my board, let the motive of your coming be what it may; and if you have taken this measure, the more prized for the trust it implies in my good faith, for purposes of your own advantage, they are already gained as far as I have power to aid them. I know you for a banished man, by decree of my late uncle, Bishop John of Liege. Do you come to ask reversal of your sentence? If so, the boon is granted—I swear it by my knightly faith!"

"Duke Philip, I come not for boon or bounty. I have long scorned that false attaint, and I never yet sought favour but with sword in hand. I came here to do you service, not to seek it. I took my place at your board, in right of your wide-spread summons, and perhaps with a cu-

rious eye to mark this goodly pageantry. But having done my task as befits a good knight, and an honest man, I hoped to go as I came, unrecognised and unquestioned. My farther presence, now that I am known, may mar these revelries, so now I take my leave; glad if the easy ingress of one, who, though not your friend, Duke Philip, is still no spy, may teach you caution against others, unpledged by bond of chivalry to respect your princely confidence. I am free to depart in peace and honour? 'Tis so, duke?"

"Ay, by my troth, sir knight, and honoured much for this high bearing, which does not belie your fame. Farewell, Sir Louis! and the more in friendship, as our next meeting may not be of a par with this."

"As you will, noble duke. If you come to visit me at Urk in friendly guise, warm welcome shall be your meed. If you plant your foot on my native soil in hostile mood, I promise

you a grasp fitting a freeman's hand on a despoiler's throat. Farewell!"

While the lion of Urk shook his mane, and was retiring from the hall, rolling a look of no tender meaning from his bloodshot eyes, St. Pol, who alone seemed to preserve his wits, at this rude speech, and that only from their being sharpened by personal enmity, called out aloud,

"This must not be endured, good Burgundy! Are not my words confirmed? Is not thy gracious nature abused by rough intruders? Let this amphibious Hollander be told, and through him, his false mistress, that Philip's friends will punish the outrage he scorns. Shall the slave of a branded adulteress—"

"Ha! is it thus thy recreant tongue holds forth?" cried Ludwick Van Monfoort, flinging back his hood once more, and, with the heavy, and somewhat lubberly stride common to his countrymen, stalking towards St. Pol. The latter, in the prompt activity of a Brabanter,

sprung from his seat, and, with hand on dagger, waited for whatever assault might come. But Bedford, Le Begue, and even De Richemont (who had a great sense of good breeding when a quarrel was not his own), interposed between the angry men, while Philip turned all his attention to quiet the alarm of the Countess of Salisbury, and the ladies of his bed and blood. Several of the lords and knights at the lower table, where Van Monfoort had been sitting, stepped forward to stop his solemn march towards St. Pol; but he dashed through every impediment, until one young man opposed his progress, with a persuasive look, and gentle but firm voice, imploring him to proceed no further.

"Ha! brother of the woodland, is it here we meet? and dost thou, too, swell the ranks of my country's foe? No matter—give me thy gallant hand in mine! That grasp of fellowship has allayed my fury. By the blood of the orox! I am pleased with this rencounter, and glad to hold thee once again in friendly clasp, though

grieved the while to see that placquet on thy arm, and know thee for an enemy."

While Van Monfoort, apparently forgetful, and certainly indifferent, to all else around him, cordially shook Vrank Van Borselen's hand, William de Begue took care to direct Duke Philip's attention to the scene, by one of those wily movements of the eye and lips, that without being explicitly either wink or sneer, has all the malice of their mixed expression. Philip answered by a nod and frown, that shewed his consciousness and his displeasure at what was passing. In the meantime Van Monfoort asked bluntly who was his new-found friend? and several voices answered for the latter, with his full name and title.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Ludwick, with a sad and solemn tone, dropping his own hand low, but without relinquishing that of Vrank, which, on the contrary, he almost crushed in his convulsive squeeze. "Indeed! and art *thou* a son of my worst foe—of him to whom I have sworn

eternal hate—of him whose heart's blood must pay his debt of wrong and insult! Be it so! God has marked me for a lone and friendless man, and I must fulfil my doom. Vrank Van Borselen, I could have loved thee—I did, by Heavens! Thy bravery, thy modesty, thy all-heroic bearing won my rough heart, and ere I knew thy name, I had vowed affection to thy nature. May I yield my death-gasp at my enemy's feet, but I had meant to seek thee through the world, and own thee for my more than son, my chosen friend—my adopted heir! Psha, psha! How's this!" continued the rude warrior, dashing Vrank's hand away, and thrusting, as it were, his own clenched fist into his eye, like as a dyke-digger might strive to dam up the gushing tide. "This is indeed disgrace, worse than the vile insult of yon braggart count —and Ludwick of Urk must fly to save him from himself—young man, farewell!—And when we meet in the battle-field, forget this weakness, and hold thyself ready for the shower

of my wrath, dealt doubly against a Borselen and a Kabblejaw!"

With these words he rushed from the hall, enveloped in his hood, and before the observers could recover themselves, or that heartless raillery and insolent pride could stifle the better feelings which were roused by the scene, Ludwick was in the saddle of his ready steed, which stood, by his orders, waiting in the court, and his heavy hoofs struck fire from the flint-stones of Hesdin pavement, ere the feasting and jollity were recommenced in the castle. By the time the wassailers were again in their places, and before any new incident of excitement could cause any serious turn of thought, the Duke of Burgundy stood up in his place of state, and after a cheerful, and even a witty preface—which he held ready made for the occasion—he took from a page behind him an emblazoned roll of vellum, which for splendid ornament might have rivalled the celebrated illuminated copy of "The Golden Legend;" and he read aloud

the following rescript, which he had received that very morning from the Sultan of Babylon, duplicates of which had been sent to almost every potentate and prince in Christendom.

"Baldadock, son of Aire, Constable of Jericho, Provost of the terrestrial Paradise, nephew of the Gods, King of Kings, Prince of Princes, Sultan of Babylon, Persia, Jerusalem, Chaldea, and Barbary, Lord of Africa, and Admiral of Arcadia, Master Archipotel, Guardian of the Isles, Dean of the Abbeys, Commander of the Temples, splitter of shields, piercer of hauberks, breaker of armour, shiverer of spears, overthrower of war-horses, destroyer of castles, flower of chivalry, a wild boar for courage, an eagle for freedom, the fear of his foes, the joy of his friends, the raiser of the discomfited, the standard of Mahomet — the lord of all the world!

"To the Kings of Germany, France, and England, and to all other Kings, Dukes, and Counts, and generally to all on whom our

courtesy may condescend, greeting, and love in our grace!

"Whereas, it is very commendable for all who please to renounce error through wisdom—We send to you that you may hasten to us, to receive your fiefs and inheritance from our hands, by denying your God and the christian faith, and abandoning the errors in which you and your predecessors have been too long involved. Should you not instantly obey these our commands, our anger will be raised and our sword turned against you, with which we will have your heads as a penalty, without sparing your countries any more than yourselves!

"Given on the vigil of the ambassadiens, the tenth year from our coronation, and the second from our noble victory and destruction of the miserable country of Cyprus!"

Not even the allusion made in this last sentence to an event so unfortunate to the cause of christianity and chivalry, had power to stifle the roars of laughter which the reading of the sul-

tan's letter excited. Duke Philip had calculated well in reckoning it a remedy against the wayward and angry moods of his many guests. It was by management like this he acquired his endearing surname. And never was he more popular in his court than on this night, which he had the address to convert from one of various disagreeable and untoward disputes, into one of broad merriment and general good humour.

CHAPTER X.

The following day was the sixth of the festivities instituted by Philip in honour of his guests; and being by public notification the last, it was determined on all hands to make it one of super-extra enjoyment. The warlike movements that were to commence on the morrow left little chance of a speedy renewal of such scenes, in which many of those then present could never hope to partake; and though few men like to encourage presentiments of ill, all grasp eagerly at present pleasures, as if each was instinctively forewarned that he was to be fate's first victim.

The earliest business of the morning, after Philip's accustomed exercises, and the despatch of breakfast, was a sporting party (in the heathy lands or wolds around the castle) of rather a mixed nature; for hawking, and coney-shooting with the cross-bow, were to be diversified by bustard-hunting, with some greyhounds of a peculiar breed trained to that long-since exploded species of chace.

Nothing could be more brilliant than the opening burst of the cortége, as the gates of the castle park were thrown wide, and the whole cavalcade appeared to the dazzled eyes of the inhabitants of Hesdin. The long train of huntsmen, falconers, and dogs, the sounding horns, the glittering liveries, the soldier-guards, the goodly company of dames and cavaliers, each lady on her gaily caparisoned palfrey, each knight accoutred for the chace, and falcon on wrist, the sounding of rings and bells, the clatter of hoofs, the mirthful conversation, and the joyous laugh—all helped to hide full many

a corrosive care, and combined to raise at once the admiration and the envy of the happily-ignorant and uninitiated lookers-on.

Duke Philip, with all his apparent devotion to the English countess, whose palfrey seemed to make one with his own, so closely did he ride beside her, had nevertheless an anxious, if not a timid glance for almost every one of the suspected individuals of his suite. With a perhaps wise policy, but at any rate with innate self-confidence, he had resolved to have about him, and close to his person, all whose designs he thought he had most reason to fear. He felt, that under the surveillance of his own quick eye they were less likely to have opportunity for working him evil. He reckoned much on the imposing effect of his grandeur; and, like all actively courageous men, he felt more composure in drawing close to danger than in contemplating its distant chance. Besides these motives, or sensations, Duke Philip was too cautious to neglect giving notice of his suspicions to some

of those followers whom he *knew* he could trust; for it is a mortifying reflection for virtuous greatness, that even the worst tyrants (and Philip certainly was not one of them) have had in all times attached and devoted followers. In this manner every individual "pricked" by William le Begue, was placed under the peculiar espionage of one of the duke's chosen confidents. The Milan knight, for instance, was entrusted to Hugo de Bourg, a Burgundian lord; Vrank Van Borselen to John Vilain, the captain of the guard; and Spalatro, the posture-master, to Jacob Wonters, Philip's first armourer by trade, and his trustiest bravo on necessity.

The sports went merrily on. The day was bright and mild, the game plenty, the dogs fleet, the falcons keen. Many partridges were struck down by their talons at the very feet of the fair dames, who had no qualms for the cruel joys of sporting, any more than for the bloody contests of the tournay. Pheasants, too, the sacred birds of chivalry when smoking on

the board, were held in no reverence in the open wood, even by the knights who worshipped them at the feast. It was in the short pause occasioned by the capture of one of those beautiful birds, half dead from fright before the merciless hawk transfixed him, that Bedford, Philip, and the other princes, were discussing with the noble ladies in a gallant group, the wonderous diversities offered by the feathered tribe to the admirers of nature. While the ladies chiefly dwelt on the bright-tinted plumage, the graceful forms, the delicious melody which render the winged tenants of air so interesting to sensitive minds, the male part of the company dilated on the strength, activity, and courage of the birds of prey. But few in that rough age had given their minds to the observance of the more philosophical phenomena of character and construction, so marvellous to the deep observer of those buoyant mysteries of creation. The shapes of their bodies, so well adapted for flight, the fitness of their

feathered coats for protection in high atmospheres and boisterous winds, the peculiar structure of their bones, made hollow to contain air, and unite lightness with strength, the anatomy of their lungs, limbs, and membranes so framed as to facilitate respiration in their volant passages, the amazing perfection of their sense of sight, their instincts of necessity in providing for their young—these and a thousand other minutiæ were little likely to form part of the disquisition. But be it what it might, profound or frivolous, it was suddenly interrupted by the discovery of a large flock of bustards, which scattering in various directions were immediately pursued by the greyhounds, as they rapidly fled on foot, or flown at by the hawks, while they slowly rose in heavy efforts to escape on the wing.

Nothing could exceed the interest of the promptly followed sport. The hunted birds in some instances baffled and beat the dogs altogether, twisting and turning before them

with the sagacity and almost the swiftness of hares, and escaping in the refuge of the furze-bushes and brushwood. Others, when hardly pressed and forced to trust themselves to flight, and even then assailed by the keen efforts of beak and talon, successfully availed themselves of the singular means of defence provided for them by nature; and spirted out from their convex bills whole quarts of water contained in the pouch which lines their throats, a reservoir for subsistence in the arid plains they frequent, or for assault when thus driven to a less congenial element than earth.

The company was quickly dispersed, in the heat and interest of this favourite sport of Duke Philip. He for a time forgot all else—his gallantries, suspicions and precautions. Sticking spurs into his horse, he rode at full speed after a couple of his first-rate greyhounds, on whose fleetness, in rivalry with others, he had laid a heavy wager with St. Pol. The chace was every moment varied by the finding of fresh

game, a new bird from the numerous flock starting up almost as fast as the old one was run down or lost, or saving that which was hunted by turning off the attention of the dogs to another object. Philip was well mounted and a skilful horseman, being indeed distinguished at every manly exercise; and now, abandoning himself wholly to the ardour of his sport, he took sudden leave of the female part of the company, and soon outrode many of his companions, who either dropped behind with the ladies, or turned aside from the immediate points of the duke's pursuit, to follow some other which had attracted their attention. A few of the suite, however, contrived to keep close to him; and among them were Vrank Van Borselen, who rode well and boldly, and Spalatro, who was a perfect master of his animal, and not more expert in using the weapons of war, than in training a courser in the manège, the open wold, or contracted enclosures. John Vilain, whose province it was, as captain of the body guard, to

be particularly near the duke's person, kept up as long as he could; but his great weight soon tired his heavy Flemish steed, and he reluctantly saw his master outstripping his staunch safeguards, and delivered as it were by Heaven into the hands of a suspected enemy. Hugo de Bourg was wholly occupied in watching Baltisini, in another part of the field; and the other men chosen by Philip for his protection were all thus variously occupied in several distant directions, with the exception of Wonters, who, long accustomed to his master's method of hunting, was never thrown out, and now, in all the vicissitudes of the chase, stuck even still closer to his side than either Spalatro or Vrank.

Above an hour had been thus consumed, during the greater part of which, Vrank, though a keen sportsman, had his attention completely turned from dogs and birds to the somewhat singular, though not quite uncommon, appearance of a cowled friar, who, mounted on a fast-going nag, had followed the varieties of the

chace, or rather of the duke's movements, in the evident purpose of being near him. A sporting priest was not then—any more than a sporting parson now—a very remarkable object. Bishops, abbots, and priors, followed game of all kinds, as keenly as lay nobles; and the inferior orders of the clergy often indulged in the example set by those whom the parlance of rank called their betters. But the churchman who now excited Vrank's observation was clearly no beneficed monk, or regular incumbent; but rather one of those mendicant friars who levied contributions on the rich, and wrung their hard earnings from the poor, during perpetual rounds of imposture and beggary. It was therefore natural enough that he should have marked the Duke of Burgundy for his prey on this occasion, hovering round till fatigue might make him languid and liberal; as a falcon hangs over a doomed bird, till the very lassitude of fear makes it resign itself to be plucked and bled, with scarce a resisting struggle.

At length, on a sudden cessation from the chace, the birds being driven far and near, and their consequent scarcity throwing the dogs at fault, on the edge of a close coppice, Philip, parched with heat, reined in his horse, and looking round, he was surprised to find himself almost alone. Close attendance on all occasions was so much a matter of course that he had not earlier thought of ascertaining whether he possessed it now, for no want had reminded him that he was mortal; but the necessity of quenching his thirst brought him to a sense of his nature, and he looked about him for a stream of water and a drinking horn, in the humility of drowthy despotism.

Jacob Wonters, used to his master's wont, immediately prepared to supply him, adding from his flask a small portion of qualifying cordial to the pure liquid caught from a running brook hard by. Vrank Van Borselen pulled up his bridle, and uncovered his head in due etiquette; and Spalatro also doffed his cap,

while he patted the neck of the fiery horse, which had been furnished him expressly, that his practised hand might tame its unruly temper.

"Wonters, how's this?" said Philip, in a subdued tone, and with an impatient glance to the right and left. "We are alone?"

"Would that we were, your highness!" answered the armourer, as he mixed the draught.

"Is no one near us but these two?" asked the duke, feeling at the same moment, as if instinctively, for the dagger which hung inside his doublet.

"None other but yon begging friar within the copse, may it please your grace—and I like neither his looks nor the way he has been watching us."

"Who meanest thou? I see none but Sir Francon and the Italian."

"Look sharper in among the trees, your highness, and you'll see one who has followed you close and marked you well, for full an hour gone."

"A begging brother, say you?" there's nought to apprehend from him, good Jacob, but an attack on my purse. These fellows rob us in the name of God, and a couple of monton d'ors can send even a prince to Paradise, if the benison of a bare-legged monk may carry him so far. Come, Jacob, hap what will, or bide what may, I must alight. Sir Florival is pressed to the utmost of his bearing; he shakes under me in his fore limbs. I was wrong to mount him to-day so soon after his fever. Aid me, fellow, to dismount!"

"The good beast trembles, sure enough, and the white foam oozes from his skin, my noble master," said Wonters, with an uneasy look. "Bad signs, too—it may be that he snuffs the scent of evil sooner than your princely eyes may spy out danger. I like not your red-bearded friar—do not dismount, good, your highness—put spurs to flank and follow me—I know this path through the forest."

"Tut, tut, Jacob," replied the duke, ashamed

to own to himself, much less to his follower, that a thrill of superstitious fear crept through him, and resolved to keep it down—" Tut, tut, thou art too scrupulous to-day. Hast seen St. Withold on the wold ? Has the Elfin Shepherd crossed thee on the plains, or did the whistle-bird chirp the death-warning in thine ear ? Give me the horn—I must repose here. We're two to two, man—and thy hunting blade is keen at point and edge.— Give me the horn !"

With these words Philip threw himself from his horse, but waved his hand with an authoritative air, as both Vrank Borselen and Spalatro made a movement of approach to his assistance. Vrank's blood boiled at the affront, and he vowed that his services should not be a second time rejected by the haughty and capricious prince, who, after the scene of yesterday, could thus confound him with a scurvy master-at-arms. Had Vrank known what notions flashed across Philip's mind, at the moment that he

repulsed his offered aid, he had pardoned him on the spot.

"This will refresh your grace, while a mouthful or two of the stream will give new courage to Sir Florival—may we then set off, I pray you, my lord?" said Wonters, presenting the drinking horn to the duke, who had sat down on a heath-covered bank, and taking with the other hand the bridle which Philip resigned to him. But as the latter raised the discoloured draught to his lips, a new pang of suspicion darted across his brain, the created heritage of despotism, as indelible as the branded mark placed on the brow of Cain.

"Jacob!" exclaimed Philip, "hast thou kept the flask to thyself all day? Did no one drink from it? Didst not entrust it to the hands of yon Italian, by whose side thou hast ridden so long?"

"My noble lord," said Wonters, earnestly, "my long-tried prudence might save me from such a surmise—the flask has never quitted my

pouch, nor been unstopped till now, since the 'squire of the buffet gave it to me full this morn at starting."

"Curse on this awkward arm!" cried Philip, even while the armourer was speaking, and letting fall the horn, as if by accident, to the ground. "But never heed it now—the cordial is spilt—no matter—no, no, good Jacob—I'll none of it—it shakes the nerves—a draught of the plain brook is still more bracing than this fermented mixture—never heed, never heed!"

While he quickly uttered these words he picked up the empty horn, and carefully shaking out every drop that still drained from its bottom, he plunged it in the stream, rinsed it more than once, then quaffed a bumper of the pure water, happily unagonized by a doubt that the very weeds on the rivulet's brink might have conspired to poison him.

Ere the horn was again from his head, the begging friar, having tied his nag to the branch of a tree, advanced with bended body and

humble mien towards the duke. One of his hands was advanced, holding a leathern pouch for the receipt of contributions; the other was concealed under his cloak. As he came forward, the duke could not resist a throb of apprehension, for the infection of Wonter's alarm found him pre-disposed for its contagion. Treachery seemed to form the atmosphere of the wild scene around him, and fate seemed to have thrown him into its desolation, a sacrifice to his own fool-hardy imprudence. Wonters, still more startled than the duke, sprang immediately towards him, as if to intercept and accost the friar, and he loosened at the same moment his hold of Sir Florival's bridle. The horse feeling himself free, plunged across the little stream, and, starting forward in all the freshness of liberty, galloped wide over the plain.

"Heaven wills it so!" thought Philip, mistaking Wonter's conduct; "even this ingrate is leagued against me, and delivers me up to his

fellow-conspirators. Now, then, Burgundy, to die with the dignity becoming thy race and station! Well, friend, what wouldst thou?" asked Philip, with his most imperious tone, his memory darting back at the instant to the scene, oft read, in which the glance of Marius' eye, paralyzed his intended murderer. But the man now addressed was of a different mould of mind from that faint-hearted slave and would-be villain.

"What would I, duke?" replied he; "the contribution of a mighty prince to the funds of my poor order."

"Thou comest too close, sirrah," said Philip, retreating a step or two, and putting a hand to his dagger, as the bold beggar strode nearer and nearer with every word he spoke.

"I have made a vow, Duke Philip, to close on you one day, and have watched long for time and place; your offering, good duke, in my pouch—your offering, duke, your offering—this, then, to thy tyrant heart!"

A hostile movement of arm, accompanied each word, and Philip was not silent or inactive the while. He hallooed out lustily, and parried each well-aimed blow, till at last the assassin's dagger struck against his breast, and broke short, while the duke stood unharmed, but was soon forced to grapple with his enemy.

"Help, Wonters, help!" cried he, as the baffled villain closed furiously on him with the broken blade, spite of his efforts to keep him at bay. The armourer had turned round from his pursuit of the horse, and was running to the call, while Spalatro, who saw what passed, shouted aloud and pressed forward his horse, and bounding over every obstacle was soon close to the duke. Vrank Van Borselen, who had been looking out in another direction from the moment of the duke's insulting gesture, now turned rapidly at the shout, and seeing Philip in a retreating combat of dagger to dagger with the friar, he dashed forward after Spalatro, drawing his short hunting-sword as his courser

galloped on. Wonters was just placed between him and the duke, and seeing, as he thought, both cavaliers flying on to immolate his master, he boldly flung himself before the one next him, and seizing Vrank's bridle, he struck at him with his sword, vociferating Flemish imprecations in fierce fluency. Vrank, paying back the compliment he received, believed Wonters to be an accomplice in the plot against Philip's life, and he steadily gave point against the armourer's loose assault, wounded him in the neck, and forced him to relinquish his grasp of the bridle, as he shrunk back from pain. In another bound or two, Vrank was close beside the group; and as he raised his hand to smite Spalatro, certain that he too was an accomplice in the intended murder, he saw the Italian, to his astonishment and delight, come close up behind the assassin and plunge his poniard into his side as he was still grappling with Philip; while at the same moment he read in the villain's face the features of one of the actors in the

scene of the Zeven-volden. We need scarcely say he gazed on Giles Postel.

The rush of thought that filled Vrank's brain, was one of those wonderful movements of the human mind, when it takes in at once a flood of light, every minute particle of which it can separate and examine in prompt micrography. That this fellow was suborned by Jacqueline, an associate of Van Monfoort, and a crowd of other conclusions formed the sum of Vrank's instant conviction. The horror of the notion overpowered that of the attempted crime; and an impulse, even stronger than anxiety for Philip's safety, hurried him closer still to the gasping wretch, that he might snatch from his dying breath the secret of his real employer. Vrank panted with excessive emotion as he sprang from his horse, grasped the fellow in one arm, and held him up to save him from being suffocated by the blood, which gushed profusely from his mouth and nostrils, as well as from his wounded side. As Spalatro coolly

wiped the crimson stain from his poniard, Philip stood, breathing short and amazed at all that passed so rapidly, and to find that he was not killed on the spot by the two so lately suspected men, who now seemed only anxious to save him, and secure his assailant, while Wonters came forward towards his chief, in unflinching fidelity and coarse contempt of pain.

"Speak, wretched man; who art thou? why hast thou attempted this deed? who set thee on?" cried Vrank, close into the ear of the writhing villain in his arms. A fresh discharge of blood totally prevented a reply, and Postel seemed actually choking, as though Death had already seized him, unabsolved and unconfessed.

"Good God! He dies, he dies!" cried Vrank, at the same time raising him up, and striving to relieve him, as if it was some dear friend whose sufferings he would alleviate. Giles Postel looked convulsively on him, as if to read the cause of such solicitude; and he immediately recognised the young stranger of

the Zeven-volden, whom he had seen receiving the girdle from Jacqueline's hands. The diabolical temper of his mind gave an instant's respite to bodily pain. He gulped down the heart's blood which was mounting to his lungs, and grasping Vrank's hand, the following words gurgled incoherently in his throat:

"The countess—the girdle—the forest—the English lord—" all the connecting words were unintelligible.

"Is the dog yet alive?" said Spalatro, stalking close to him, and raising his poniard to complete his work; but Vrank caught his arm, and hurriedly expressed the importance of hearing the villain's revelation. Philip, reassured of his own safety, and convinced that his suspicions had been misplaced, anxiously seconded Vrank's appeal, and interposed between Spalatro's dagger and Postel's body; at the same time holding back Wonters, who had now come up, and was blindly rushing against the group, still believing that his master was beset by three

conspirators, and unable to distinguish the real condition of any.

"What said he, Sir Francon?" eagerly asked the duke. "Did he mention names? did he confess to his associates?"

"The countess!" muttered the wounded man, gasping in the new effort.

"Which! which, fellow?" asked Philip, straining down close to him. Postel attempted to answer, but could not utter a word. Failing in speech, he pointed to a ring, on the hand that was pressed against his heaving chest.

"Again, again!" cried Philip—"new damning proof of her infamy! Her father's signet ring, by Heavens!" and these words of condemnation found a too deep echo in Vrank Van Borselen's heart, for he at once recognized the sparkling gem, in its rich-wrought setting, which had particularly caught his attention among the others which ornamented the fair hand that he had pressed in his during the perilous contest in the Zeven-volden. He could

speak no more. His mind was overpowered by the conviction of Jacqueline's guilt, and he gave no heed to Philip's continued but vain efforts to extract further information from Giles Postel. At length, the latter seemed by some violent internal effort to regain at once strength, consciousness, and the power of free utterance.

"Ay," cried he, "I am now better—I knew it would pass over—it will take a deeper thrust to do Giles Postel to death. Ah, Philip, you have escaped me!—I little thought you wore armour under your pourpoint, or I should have struck you in the throat, not the breast. But your day will come—my next blow shall—"

Ere he could finish his ferocious sentence he sunk back, exhausted on the earth.

"Let the villain die," said Vrank, in ineffable disgust: "he has spoken too much."

"No, no," cried Philip, "let's raise him up again. Give him water, good Sir Francon. Here, Spalatro, loose the buttons of his doublet.

He must not escape me thus—he has yet treasures to reveal.—See, he revives."

The distorted eyes did once more give a blood-shot stare of consciousness. They fixed first on Philip, then turned aside and rested on Vrank.

"You wear her favour—so does Glocester—Fitz-walter—so do—I—even I!—I saw her covered with Flemish blood on the field of Gouda—I clasped her close in the silent hall of Amersfort—I—Let Duke John look to himself.—The countess's collar is even now on his throat. It was *your* hand that dealt me this blow," continued he, suddenly fixing his stern look on Spalatro—"*you*—I have marked you—and may perdition seize me—may my soul—"

"He is gone!" exclaimed Philip, in an accent of deep regret, while a short convulsive struggle stopped the ruffian's words; and the upturned eyes and falling jaw gave to the accustomed witnesses of violent death the unerring tokens that all was over.

"He is gone—but he has said enough—she is condemned for ever. Tear open his garments, and let's see what secrets may lurk on his person.—Let's discover who he is."

Jacob Wonters, who had recovered from the shock of his sudden but slight hurt, and who now began to see the real state of things, immediately busied himself in dragging off the monkish disguise from the corpse, and closely examined the articles of dress. But no clue was found of Postel's name or calling; and while the examination went on, the sounds of horns were heard approaching; and in a little more, St. Pol, John Vilain, and some others came riding up in anxious search for the duke, who gave to his cousin count a rapid sketch of what had passed. As soon as John Vilain saw the dead body, he exclaimed,

"By Heavens! that is Giles Postel, Van Monfoort's squire!"

"Van Monfoort's!" cried Philip, St. Pol, and Vrank Van Borselen all together; and the

two former required but an interchange of glances to read their mutual conviction that the knight was not guiltless of the criminal attempt of his squire. Their farther suspicions did not then find vent; but while the duke gave orders to Wonters to let the body be buried where it then lay, and graciously acknowledged Spalatro for the saviour of his life, Vrank remarked that Philip passed him silently by, with a look that spoke far more enmity than indifference. While the others of the now increasing cavalcade rode away, he remained behind with the corpse, not without a special object connected with its burial.

This adventure formed a fertile subject of discourse and conjecture for the rest of the day; and Philip, tired of the hollow or exaggerated congratulations of interested friends or cringing familiars, took refuge in the winding mazes of the dance, which closed the evening's entertainment, an amusement in which his excellence was equal to his delight.

The next morning saw a total change in the halls and courts of Hesdin Castle. The whole of the numerous company had dispersed soon after dawn. Every individual had set off on his separate destination. Bedford, with his duchess, and numerous suite, for London, to exert his influence with Glocester, and prevent his committing England in a quarrel with Philip; leaving the while to a commission of great lords at Paris the care of his nephew's (Henry the Sixth) possessions against the untiring attempts of Charles the Seventh, and his enterprising, though at that time unlucky friends. St. Pol to Brabant, to look to the government of his dying brother's dominions. De Richemont and his brother the duke to their dominions in Britanny, to strain every nerve of hostility towards England; while the foreign knights, who had tilted at the jousts, feasted at the board, and danced in the hall, now wended on their various ways of errantry or war, loaded with proofs of Philip's profuseness.

The vassals of Burgundy, his ministers and followers all, soon occupied their several posts of preparation for the expedition against Holland, the preliminary points of which had been long going forward, under all this apparent abandonment to pleasure and dissipation. Not a day was lost, and nothing was neglected that could tend to ensure success. Every moment which Philip could snatch from the council-room or camp was divided between dalliance in the company of his beloved countess, superintendance of his various suits of armour with Jacob Wonters, and trials of skill, and lessons of martial exercise with Spalatro.

Intelligence of a somewhat startling nature was, on one of the latest of those days of preparation, received from Brussels. It announced the seizure and execution of a young student, for an attempt to strangle Duke John with an iron collar. The dying words of Giles Postel were remembered on this occasion, and not one individual in Hesdin Castle had a doubt of Jacqueline's complicity in John Chevalier's crime.

CHAPTER XI.

JACQUELINE'S friends, the faithful and victorious Hoeks, were indefatigable in obtaining information of the Duke of Burgundy's movements; and every possible preparation was made to meet the coming shock, by those whose courage or despair made them equal to the crisis. The English force, the main reliance of the common cause, was concentrated in the island of Schowen, which private information had pointed out as the intended point of attack, by

the formidable army which now day by day approached from Picardy and Flanders. The contingents from the various towns of Holland and Zealand, which were faithful to Jacqueline, hastened to that rendezvous for the main division of her forces; but serious defection from her cause became evident as the danger approached; and though some volunteers from the chapter and city of Utrecht came frequently straggling up, the promised reinforcement of the bishop's men-at-arms and pikemen had not yet made their appearance. Several letters, indeed, reached Jacqueline from her reverend ally, cheering her on with words of advice and frothy phrases of good-will—but Zweder Van Culembourg's name was not yet fairly committed, in such a way as to entitle it to be placed on the muster-roll of the just cause.

Jacqueline still held her little court at Amersfort, the strongest and most secure of all her towns. Her mother remained with her, upholding, in appearance, her spirits and courage,

but in reality causing, by her presence, an effect almost sufficient to paralize her native energy.

Fitz-walter had set off to take the command of his little army. The gay-hearted Louis had also left his sister, and repaired to the post of active duty. Rudolf Van Diepenholt was following up his own interests, the better to enable him to serve Jacqueline with the chapter of Utrecht; so that with the exception of the rude and often unmanageable chiefs of the friendly faction, who formed her counsel, Jacqueline was left almost wholly dependent on the resources of her own powerful mind. But these did not fail her in this important crisis. She bore well and firmly her many mortifications and privations; and reposing solely on Benina Beyling's fidelity, she seemed straining herself to the utmost pitch of endurance against ill-fate.

The forebodings of coming ruin which she could not repress were not a little strengthened by Ludwick Van Monfoort, who now returned from his mission to Hesdin, and bluntly told

to his anxious mistress all that befel him there. He detailed his having contrived, by bribing a servant, to slip a warning billet into Duke Philip's plate, even at his banquet board; and his having been obliged to leave the castle without otherwise being able to thwart Giles Postel's diabolical designs. Whether they had succeeded or failed he knew not; but he took care to add fresh and acute pain to Jacqueline's uncertainty on that head, by informing her that the young Kabblejaw hunter, in whose praise he had so often in his own despite held forth, was no other than a minion of Burgundy, a vowed partisan of John of Brabant. and the son of the worst enemy to Jacqueline, himself, and the party of the Hoeks in general.

This was an agonising winding up of Jacquelin's suffering on Vrank's account. She had clung to the hope that, though a Kabblejaw and a follower of Philip, he might have borne a name of no deep importance in the cause of

faction, and might have been open to inducements to relinquish the service of tyranny. But to hear that he was the son and heir to the hereditary hate of the Borselens, and one of the pledged creatures of her odious husband and his infamous cause, was a climax of unlooked for despair.

"Well!" she cried, in the first moment of privacy, after the receipt of this afflicting news, —"Well! the vision is dissolved, the prism shattered for ever! He is lost to me, without a shadow of chance! Oh, pride, pride, where art thou sunk? Why dost thou not rouse up to strengthen me in this humiliated hour? Lost to me ere found—snatched away ere clasped—my bitter foe—hating my very name, perhaps, and vilifying the heart that would freely bleed to death, were the author of its wounds but worthy. Rouse from this lethargy of love, my soul! for ever be forgotten this base episode in my life! Let me rush into the teeth of my foes—alone—hating and despising mankind,

and shaming by my death the slanderers of my life! Alas! alas! this is all boast and bravado—I can no more oppose the torrent that assails me—this last blow bends me to the earth. Oh, pride, dignity, consciousness of right! where are ye now? How unavailing all to stem the tide of luckless love!" and the tears of the high-minded woman gushed out, a bitter tribute to the inherent tyranny of that passion which conquers the best and bravest spirits

A few days following this, direct intelligence came from England that Duke Humphrey had publicly avowed his marriage with Elinor Cobham, who, as Duchess of Glocester, and wife of England's protector, had at once stepped to a height only short of the throne, and found many a too ready apologist for the arts which procured her misplaced elevation. Jacqueline heard this intelligence in the midst of her little council. All around her were influenced with indignation at this base betrayal of every

tie of honour, and every claim of duty. Countess Marguerite vowed deep and bitter vengeance on the perjured Glocester. Van Monfoort cursed him with all his heart and soul, at the same time admitting that he believed him to have been the sport of a fiend in human form.

Jacqueline alone maintained a calm and cold demeanour, which she did not mistake for dignity, nor shall we represent it as such. It was in fact indifference, which so often passes for self-command — total indifference. Had she heard the news some days earlier, her proud blood might have stirred more rapidly, and anger have repelled, or at least rebuked the wrong. But now the defection of Glocester, which she had long made up her mind to expect, came as an event the most common-place; nor did she even feel a throb of triumph at the avowed degradation in which he was overwhelmed.

Apparently dead to all private feelings, she seemed to concentrate all her powers for one

grand public struggle; and it was only in the solitude of her chamber, and with the communings of her heart that she gave way to even one voluntary betrayal of her wretchedness. In the mean time the preparations for war went on. The enemy approached; and Jacqueline was resolved to put herself, as usual, at the head of her troops, and stifle, in the throng of action, the intolerable torment of her mind.

The year was now advancing to its close. Long files of water-fowl were seen stretching across the sky in inland flight. The foliage was swept from the trees, and the bare branches creaked responsive to the wintery blasts, while the crisped leaves crackled beneath the feet of the traveller. The sunbeams or the breezes formed alike free passage through the forest depths; and the skeleton forms of nature called up the reflections of the moralist, or warned the mere sensual observer of the wants which come in the train of the world's annual decay. Jacqueline, of all beings existing, sympathised the

most keenly with the coming dreariness and desolation. She felt that the early winter of her life was setting in; and her withered hopes, and the frozen sources of joy seemed to say, that for her there would be no spring.

Indulging this sad mood, she used to sit for hours, whenever she could snatch time from the labours of the council-room, or the forms of her little court, in her private chamber, watching the red sun as it sunk behind the frosty haze of a Dutch twilight, or the moon struggling up through the dense vapour, in colours of darkness and blood, and growing gradually clear and bright as it arose, like the disembodied soul escaping from the stained atmosphere of mortality. A solemn strain of thought seemed at such times to flow, like mental music, through the high-strung chords of Jacqueline's feelings. Contempt of the world and its wasting wishes was settling into a profound principle within her mind; and she seemed to have reached as near as possible to that unimpassioned tone of high

philosophy for which she had hitherto vainly longed, when a circumstance took place that hurled her at once from this pedestal of unnatural pride, and brought her down once more to the level of mortal suffering and sympathy.

On such an evening as we have described, in the month of December, 1425, our heroine (who was then beyond all rivalry the heroine of her age) retired early from the afternoon meeting of the council, as was her wont, and sat at her high and narrow casement, which opened out directly into, and was on a level with a terrace in the spacious but gloomy gardens of the palace. She had given orders that she should not be disturbed. Her scanty suite had withdrawn. Benina Beyling was occupied, inditing, by her orders, a private despatch to Lord Fitz-walter, in reply to a letter expressive of his continued devotion to her cause, and of Glocester's orders that he should uphold it to the last extremity. Countess Marguerite was busily employed, with Van Monfoort, one of the Hemsteds, and other

leaders of the Hoeks, in her own cabinet, on some point of immediate importance; so that Jacqueline reckoned on an hour or more of that complete solitude in which her mother was so little disposed to indulge her, from dread of its aiding the growth of that morbid melancholy which she perceived to be fast sapping her health and peace of mind. The plain oaken chair on which Jacqueline sat, during that and many another such hour of sad reflection, is still preserved ;* and its high-seated, low-backed, and altogether inconvenient construction, seems (to a fanciful mind at least) to give force to the picture of harsh suffering of which its nearly-forsaken and persecuted occupant was then the victim. A table was before her, and on it lay an illuminated manuscript of the story of Sir Lanval, who was carried off by the fairy Tryamour. The vellum pages were from time to time turned over by Jacqueline's mechanical fingers; but while her eyes wandered over the grotesque

* In the Museum of the Hague.

embellishments, they took in nothing of the quaintly told story, which at another epoch might have so much interested and amused her. A lute lay by her side, but it was untouched, save when in a moment of listlessness she now and then swept her hand across the strings, without method or object, producing such wild and unformed melody as though it was the wind that sighed wantonly over the instrument, and made it discourse the music of a dream. As she gazed out into the garden, her eyes, which had for some time been fixed on what is commonly called vacancy, (a phrase that expresses but the void within,) were suddenly filled with the observation of a figure, that caused her an instant pang of astonishment, doubt, and terror. There was something in the motion of the figure, which was that of a cloak-enveloped man, as it glided stealthily through the twilight shade, that proved it, as she thought, to be not of the earth on which it trod. But before she had time to follow up her train of doubt on that

point, the approach of the object, and her discovery of its features convinced her, without any force of logical deduction or proof of argument. She plainly recognised the pale sad countenance of him who had so long, irresistibly and uncalled for, filled her mental vision, in the bloom and animation of the inspiring moments passed in the heart-stirring excitement of the Zeven-volden.

There are certain moods of mind in which conviction on any point brings a whole host of reasoning into immediate play, accompanying the effect, which in the regular sequence of thought it might be supposed to precede. Such was at this moment the frame of Jacqueline's mind, prepared for the reception of the mystery that presented itself, and weighing the evidences at the same instant that it admitted the fact.

"He is dead!" faintly uttered she; and the tremulous movement of her lips continued, from the effect of the thrill that shook her whole frame, for many seconds after the words

had ceased to leave their whispered impress on the vibrating circles of air.

"He is dead!" repeated the inward echoes of thought, and the sound of the sentiment seemed to fall heavily upon her heart. "No living man of his party or opinions could have found entrance here, or have dared to brave the perils of such an intrusion. He is dead, and his spirit is come to warn me that *my* hour is near at hand."

"Countess Jacqueline!" said the figure, in slow, solemn, and somewhat stern accents, which thrilled through our heroine in sepulchral murmurings; and as the words were uttered, the speaker stood full before her, on the elevated steps which led to the parterre, and with an attitude at once respectful and dignified, he removed the cap, the dark plume of which had served to cast his features into deeper shade.

"I come," continued he, "to *fulfil* a sacred mission:" and as he spoke, with eyes firmly fixed on her he addressed, a glow of real living

crimson rushed to his cheek and brow. What it was that Vrank Van Borselen perceived in the expression of the face before him to cause this sudden emotion, may be imagined by the lively fancy that can picture, though it has never known, the prompt intelligence which darts a meaning to the lover's keen-searching eye. The secret volume of thought, opened to him by Jacqueline's electrical glance, might well have caused a rush of blood from his heart. He read at once the whole history of her feelings towards him. But had any repelling doubt checked this rushing flood of conviction, her tongue and her whole person gave instant evidence, to ratify the terms in which her looks had signed the absolute surrender of her heart.

"Thank Heaven, thank Heaven, he lives!" cried Jacqueline, in the impassioned tone of overwhelming joy; "it is he, he himself! oh, God, this is too much!"

And as she spoke, she sprang from her chair and flung herself towards Vrank. But the in-

spiration that urged the exclamation and the movement, acting on her over-wrought frame of mind, and too highly excited state of nerve, a throb of intense pain darted at the same moment through both her head and heart, and she was falling utterly helpless to the ground, when Vrank caught her in his arms, and became instantly almost as much deprived of strength or perception as she.

Every transition of such a scene is electrical. The mind's lightning flashes quick through the storm-gusts of passion.

"Come in, come in!" cried Jacqueline, in almost frantic tones, recovering her whole strength and self-command. "You are lost, if we are seen!" and, without breaking from the embrace in which she was still clasped, she inclined her form inwards from the platform, so that a step or two (which Vrank to his life's end persisted in believing to have been made by her alone) brought the almost unconscious pair clear inside the casemented door-way; and the next

moment that allowed either of them a certain perception of what passed, found Jacqueline reclining once more in her oaken arm-chair; and Vrank on his knees before her, pressing her cold hand to his bosom, and imprinting it with kisses that might have warmed a marble statue.

"Rash man!" said Jacqueline, at length, but not in accents of reproach or anger, "how could you have ventured this step? Is it thus you would serve me, by dooming yourself to ruin?"

"To ruin!" repeated Vrank, in a tone of terrified reality that made Jacqueline shudder again.

"To ruin! Oh, God, what oracle is it that thus speaks my doom! This is indeed ruin!"

Yet while he spoke, and felt the whole depth of the sentiment, he made not the slightest effort to escape from the peril so avowed and felt; but remained fixed in his attitude of devotion, at the shrine which all his sense of sight

pronounced to be that of an idol which it was little short of infamy to worship.

" You are too truly risking your own destruction, if discovered here," returned Jacqueline, taking a view widely different of Vrank's situation than the one which overwhelmed him, and marvelling not a little at the contradiction between his words, which spoke so keen a sense of danger, and his actions which seemed to defy it. But there was nothing in this that was not flattering to her; and even at such a moment she was not displeased at so powerful a tribute to her influence. She felt instantly convinced that Vrank had abandoned every thing for her —but her swimming head, and throbbing heart were not in unison with any profound plan of self-examination.

" But fear not," continued she, in soothing and re-assuring accents, and in the first impulse of her generous gratitude—" fear not, for your risk is mine; the peril that assails you shall strike me as well. *I* care nothing for conse-

quences now—you have made your cause mine —happen what may, we stand or fall together."

Nothing could exceed the mental agony that agitated Vrank while these words were spoken. He knew not what to do or say. He felt rivetted to the floor on which his knee was still bent. A spell of ruin seemed indeed upon him; and he felt as if he only wanted strength to put himself at once to death, and escape from the terrible situation into which his weakness had plunged him. It was bad enough to know that he had violated every one of his own well-digested intentions, sacrificed his reason, committed his principles—but there was still a keener pang in the reproach of having misled a deceived and confiding woman into the avowal of a passion which he dared not suffer himself to return, and which, be her errors or crimes what they might, bore the stamp of genuine and intense devotion to him. And perhaps self-love came in for its share in his feeling as well as in her's, to aid in

the bewildering maze of sensations in which he seemed lost. Be it as it might, he felt a sudden throng of excuses and arguments in Jacqueline's favour all at once rushing on his mind. Some internal conviction seemed to tell him "she is innocent"—but he heard not the still small whisper of unconscious vanity which added, "How could the being who loves me thus be criminal?"

The current of Vrank's reflections was now rapidly turning, and it would soon have set all one way, but for that righting principle of stern duty, which on many an occasion had preserved him from excess, and which now suddenly shifted the whole machinery of his mind, displaying, as though by the touch of a magic wand, the direct reverse of the reasoning by which he was suffering himself to be carried along. Action and thought were equally prompt. He dropped the fair hand from his heretofore convulsive grasp, rose quickly from his kneeling posture, and, once more standing upright and firm, he felt the

force of independence new-nerving his mind and body.

"Countess Jacqueline," said he, at length, with infinitely more tenderness, but not less firmness than at first, "this has been a trying moment for us both God knows it took me by surprise—that is my sole excuse, before Heaven or my own conscience—let it be so as well with you. I am overwhelmed at the scene that has passed—I should deserve to be struck dead if I had contemplated or planned it. I sought your presence, not with one view ungenerous or presumptuous, and bitterly do I lament the error into which my coming has led you."

Jacqueline listened to this solemnly spoken preface with breathless interest, and she gazed on him intently as he went on.

"If the hurry of the event, the memory of a former scene, or the over-keen sense of my danger, has forced you into the betrayal of a too acute sensibility, think not that I could

avail myself of it unworthily. Regain your dignity as I have recovered my place."

"Away with dignity and false distinctions from this hour!" exclaimed Jacqueline, seeing only in Vrank's demeanour, a slavish veneration for her rank, and urged by her native sense of station to take the lead in the conference, and set right the timid youth as to her feelings, both for his sake and her own.

"No," continued she, "this is not the season for cold forms—the full heart spurns them now. Your place is found, nor is my pride debased. I know you to be noble, equal in birth to any, as something tells me you are superior in soul to most. The barrier between us is broken down—I forget all, but the sympathy that tells—that *commands* me to esteem and honour you."

Vrank's brain seemed to reel again. He could not bear the brilliant glance of the full eyes that beamed on him, but he let his own drop their looks upon the ground.

"Speak then, freely, valiant and noble knight," said Jacqueline; "tell me what my heart anticipates, yet yearns to have confirmed, that you have given up the cause of tyranny and wrong, and are come to make mine invincible!"

"Countess, you drive me mad!" cried Vrank, with great emotion, throwing aside his cloak, and tearing open the breast of his pourpoint, as he spoke. "I can no longer bear the torture of your misplaced confidence. Alas! I am not your friend or partizan, though I do feel the path of duty is leading me to utter misery. Look here, and here!"

Jacqueline in her turn, became almost speechless and stupified, at marking the red cross of Burgundy still on his breast, and the placquet, which had been so minutely described by Van Monfoort, fastened to his arm.

"How then came you here?" murmured she, after a pause, "and wherefore?"

"I made no display of these badges, which a

solemn vow forces me to bear; and this token procured me free passage through your gates."

Jacqueline covered her face with her hand, on discovering the ring she had given to Giles Postel.

"Let me hide out my shame!" exclaimed she. "I ask not how or where you obtained that fatal gem; but why, in mercy tell me why, thus badged, thus decked—to wound me to the heart's core—why art thou here?"

"I am here, Countess Jacqueline, at the behest of honour and chivalry. God pity me, if less high inducements helped to urge me on! I meant not, St. Andrew be my witness, to outrage one feeling of your heart by wantonly displaying those badges of my service and my faith. But, mark ye, noble lady, this still more precious gage. It was given me in high and generous confidence—I could not return it but by mine own hand, direct into that which had placed it here."

With these words Vrank deliberately unfast-

ened the girdle from round his neck, and drew it from his bosom.

"*Return* it!" exclaimed Jacqueline, in a voice that was the true type of her sinking heart. "And why return it?—why not wear it still?—the feeling that prompted the gift is still active in my heart."

Insensible to all arguments of upholding pride, Jacqueline felt her own voice fail, and her heart beat wildly; and without a thought of humiliation or shame, she was conscious that the warm tears ran streaming down her cheeks. Vrank saw this unerring proof of anguish. He felt that his knee bent involuntarily, and that his heart again did homage, and perhaps, had a single other word escaped from Jacqueline's lips, he had fallen once more at her feet, and vowed himself to her for ever. But she spoke not, for in that hour of sad sincerity she was not capable of forming an artificial thought, or uttering a word for effect; and Vrank was

able to preserve the utmost force of his mind, all needed in so trying and touching a case.

He was too much affected by her distress, and we may confess, too painfully gratified by it, to admit a notion of its being unreal; but he recalled in his own despite, like some desperate resource of a drowning man, every thing that, by telling against her, might aid in saving him from the snare that sensibility had prepared for him. If he encouraged these thoughts, as they flashed across him, it was less in the spirit of accusation than in right of self-defence. The broken, but damning revelations of Giles Postel —the long believed charges relative to her poisoned uncle—her misrepresented connection with Glocester—Duke Philip's diatribes—the hate of his own parents—the fury of his party, all rose at once before Vrank; and as yet, he had not heard one word of justification from Jacqueline's lips, except, indeed, their avowal of her feelings towards himself. With many men, that had proved sufficient to absolve her

from all, and heavier charges than Vrank's memory had recorded against her. But, be it a merit or a defect, his mind was of a different mould; for, though intensely gratified by, and grateful for her evident attachment, and though thoroughly surprised by the discovery, he preserved the balance between reason and feeling; and his self-respect, preserved him from being overpowered by the mere force of sighs or tears.

All that we have endeavoured briefly to trace, passed with infinitely greater rapidity in our hero's mind; but the words and actions consequent on his thoughts, were less abrupt than their written description can be. He summoned up his utmost fortitude, and held forward the girdle in his outstretched hand. Jacqueline mechanically accepted it. He felt relieved from an oppressive burden—she seemed as though the link which bound her to her last hope was severed.

"Heaven be praised!" said Vrank, "I have fulfilled the duty of a true and honourable

knight. Countess, I have worn your favour worthily, and had I never known it for yours, so may I rest in Heaven, no mortal man should have ever wrenched it from me, or carried it attaint, but with the sacrifice of my life or at the price of his. But being yours, 'twas not for me to bear a badge that belied my every principle of duty and of reason. You have a right to further explanation, but I cannot voluntarily wound where I have already done unmeant mischief. I must be silent, and let your candour supply my want of words."

"Speak on! oh, speak on! you can say nothing now to do me deeper harm!"

"These words and looks afflict me, madam, to my heart's depths. Better that I retire, and leave you to forget you ever knew me, or honoured me with a thought."

"Oh, stay awhile, even in this atmosphere of terrible danger. Explain this conduct, as cruel as it is perhaps just."

"Let me then speak in my own justification.

I urge not my fealty to my lawful prince, my fidelity to my family creed, all stamping me your political opponent; but God, who reads my heart, knows I am not your foe. But as a gentleman, a soldier, an unpledged and true knight, could I wear the favour of her, all princess, all enchantress as she be, whose badge is also worn by Glocester and Fitz-walter? whose troth is bound to one man, and whose heart is in the keeping of another; ay, ay, mayhap shared with two or *more*; whose fair fame bears attaint, and oh! with deep pain is the reproach drawn from my reluctant bosom, whose creatures carry murder into the palace of her husband, and against her cousin's breast; and one of whom, the lowest and vilest of mankind, bore the stamp of his terrible commission in that very signet-ring which I dragged from his death-stiffened finger, where her hand had placed it. Oh, pardon me if I speak too bluntly; 'tis the open heart that prompts the candid phrase I see how my words move you;

silence my tongue for ever, and lift a load off my mind, by one sentence of denial, one word of justification !"

During this speech, in which Vrank had gone much farther than he had intended, Jacqueline felt all the rapid transition from submission to resistance, all that revival of fiery pride and indignation which outraged virtue and hurt dignity could feel. The blood of twenty-four sovereign princes, her predecessors and ancestors, seemed to glow in her veins and swell her heart. Every throb of tenderness was hushed. Her tears dried suddenly up. The lassitude of suffering which had before unnerved her was replaced by a prompt tension of mind and frame. She was all at once a heroine, ready to repel a wrong, able to sacrifice happiness, or lay down life in support of her injured honour, but scorning to pronounce one syllable of denial, or urge one plea of defence, against assertions which ought, as she felt, to be annihilated by their

very utterance; like the noxious insect which dies from the impurity of its own breath.

Rising up in her chair erect, as though she sat on her sovereign throne—

"Denial!" said she, "justification! What then, is it come to this? Is Jacqueline of Holland to be so accused and so summoned? Is the whole noble line of Bavaria to be dragged to judgment in my person, like some peasant hind, on such charges as these? Oh, God! what have I done to earn this? And you, Sir, who have taught me this bitter lesson—how have I mistaken you—how forgot myself! How could you dare to harbour such thoughts of me, or having them, how venture to form them into speech? If the dignity of a long line of princes could not exempt, might not the privilege of my sex protect me from your outraging words? But I forgive you—it is the prejudice of your birth, and the degradation of your service that are to blame. What could

I look for else from a Borselen, a traitorous Kabblejaw, and a hireling of Burgundy ?"

While Jacqueline was thus urged on by her impetuous scorn to say much more than in sober resentment she would have done, Vrank was affected in the same tender point in which she had been so deeply hurt. Her galling reproaches goaded his pride, which turned like a wounded deer upon its assailant—and he asked himself, "Is this like innocence? Is it not rather the boisterous tone of conscious guilt ?" but his usual clear-sightedness was obscured by his rising irritation, and he did not reflect that symptoms which, in a common person, would have justified his conclusion, were not at all inconsistent with the ire of high station, carried beyond itself, at being accused, and disdaining the notion of defence.

"Madam," said Vrank, with all the calm he could assume, "I must not shrink from these opprobrious epithets, nor do I wince under

them. A clear conscience can disprove even worse accusal, as does mine even now."

"A high mind scorns to refute a base charge, as mine does—and so you may tell your tyrant master, at whose bidding mayhap you have offered me this outrage."

"Madam, I see you know me not," replied Vrank, "and for both our sakes I grieve that ever chance has thrown me in the way of your misconception."

"For your own sake, Sir, but for mine, spare your regret. A chance meeting may be forgotten with as much ease as it occurred.—It can cost me little to efface so slight a stain on my memory."

"I should not have thought so erewhile," said Vrank, with a bitter smile, finding it impossible to repress the proud consciousness of the influence which she had so palpably acknowledged.

"That smile of too ready triumph may turn to mortifying bitterness yet, Heer Borselen, when you find that the weakness of the woman

is merged in the contempt of the princess. And now, Sir, you are free to retire—your mission of insult being accomplished—making your passage out as best you may."

Vrank swelled with offended pride. He never had been so thoroughly angry either with another or himself. He would have given worlds that it was a man who had thus treated him. All his usual powers of reasoning were whelmed in the angry flood; and he did not at the moment perceive that the source of his emotion was not in the expressions of Jacqueline's contempt, but in the deep-felt passion which had just created the sensitiveness that those expressions so painfully irritated.

"I obey you, countess," exclaimed he; "I leave you, and my good sword shall carve its way through the dangers which, as your words imply, are to oppose my retreat."

"Dangers!" cried Jacqueline, the idea of those that might assail him bursting on her like a painful ray of light. "I threatened none—I

wished you none, Heaven be my pledge! Go, since you think so basely of me—but go safely. —Wrap well your cloak over those hateful tokens—a hundred deaths await their discovery in these walls!"

"I neither court nor shun death," replied Vrank, moved by her generous anxiety for his safety, "though life gains no new value from this scene."

While he replaced his cap on his head, and flung his cloak across his breast and shoulders, retiring towards the garden the while, Jacqueline felt a new flood of gentle feelings rush within her breast. The fine countenance of the young man, which the dim twilight shewed with a softened effect, spoke a volume of deep feelings. His magnanimity of character seemed all at once revealed without an effort on his part, and acknowledged without one qualifying doubt on hers. The effect was irresistible. Hurt pride, wounded dignity, offended virtue, all gave way to the powerful influence of unbounded love;

and Jacqueline was on the point of following the impulse that once more urged her towards him, who was in every true essential her lover, when she was interrupted and shocked by the sudden inburst of several armed men, who rushed from the garden ; and before Vrank could even throw aside his cloak to grasp his weapon's hilt, he was forcibly seized and violently held captive, in the grasp of half-a-dozen sinewy hands.

END OF VOL. II.

LONDON:
HENRY BAYLIS, JOHNSON'S-COURT, FLEET-STREET.

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